

Vol. 42, No. 2  
MAY 1954

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# *Art in America*



**American Primitive Painting**

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COVER *Columbia* painted in oil by an unknown artist  
in Connecticut about 1810

FOREWORD ..... 95  
Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch

PAINTINGS FOR THE PEOPLE ..... 96  
Alice Winchester

PORTRAIT GALLERY OF PROVINCIAL AMERICA..... 98  
Frank O. Spinney

INHABITED LANDSCAPES ..... 106  
James Thomas Flexner

DAILY LIFE OF THE AMERICAN FOLK ..... 112  
Louis C. Jones

COLLOQUIAL HISTORY PAINTING ..... 118  
Virgil Barker

STILL LIFE AND PRETTY PIECES ..... 126  
Carl W. Drepperd

IN MEMORIAM ..... 135  
Edith Gregor Halpert

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS ..... 139  
Donald A. Shelley

COACH, SIGN AND FANCY PAINTING ..... 147  
Nina Fletcher Little

CONTRIBUTORS ..... 168

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Subscription: \$6.00 a year. Foreign sub-  
scriptions 50 cents extra postage. \$1.50  
the copy. Trial subscription (new sub-  
scribers only) \$3.50.

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ART IN AMERICA, May, 1954. Vol. 42,  
No. 2, published quarterly. Copyright 1954 by  
Jean Lipman. Printed by the Pond-Ekberg  
Company, Springfield, Mass. Entered as sec-  
ond-class matter April 28, 1936, at the post  
office at Springfield, Mass., under act of  
March 3, 1879.

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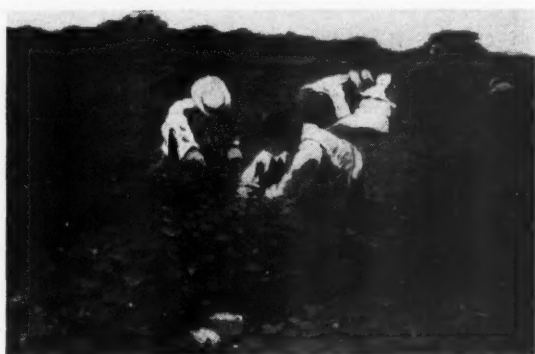


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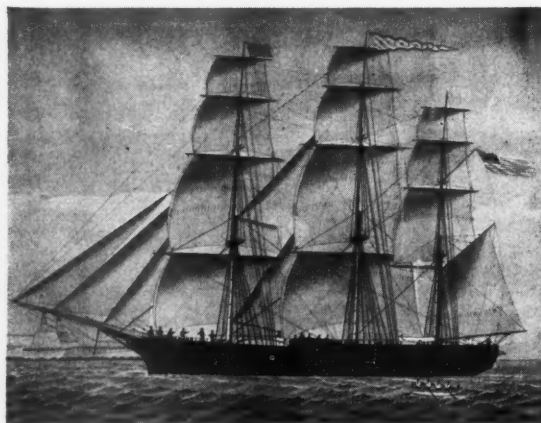
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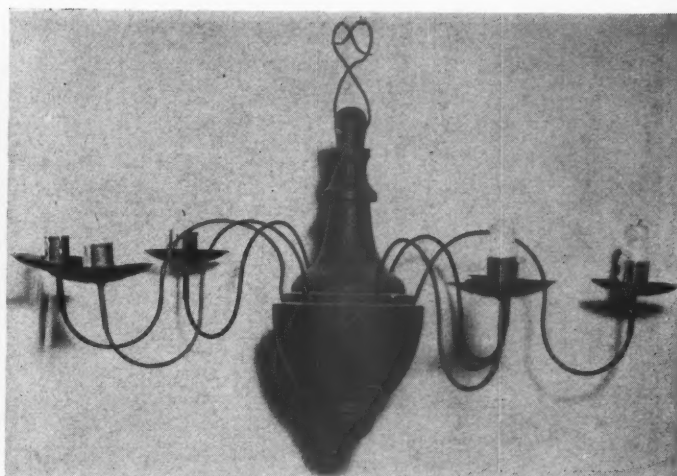
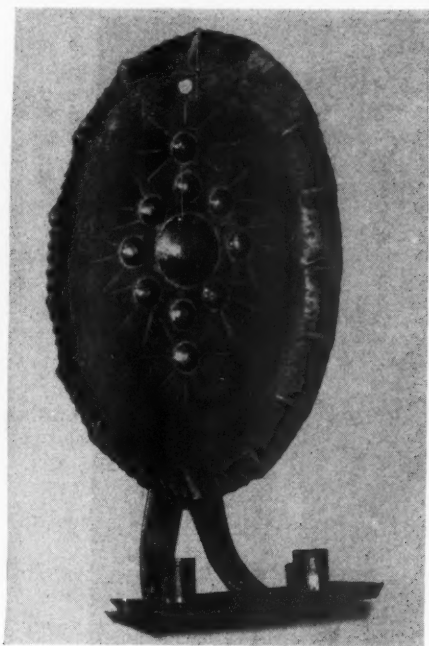
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LINTON PARK: Flax-scutching Bee. Oil on bed ticking. c. 1860. Pennsylvania



# Foreword . . .

## American Primitive Painting

Our undertaking to assemble a comprehensive collection of American primitive paintings has turned out to be a most exciting venture for both of us. It has led us to many interesting people and to many fascinating experiences, nearby and many miles away. It has stimulated us to a great deal of study about our country's early days and ways, and has awakened us to a fuller understanding and deeper appreciation of the greatness of our national heritage.

We started our search for American primitive paintings in 1944, shortly after we had acquired a home on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. We were about to furnish this home with American antiques and decided that American primitive paintings would be the most suitable to hang on the walls. We saw in these native American works of art those unique qualities of simplicity, forthright directness, and creative vitality in color and design, which set them apart as being so indigenous to our country, so genuinely American.

By the time we had gathered a representative group of these pictures, we had arrived at the very definite conclusion that good American primitive paintings reflect extraordinary creative imagination and possess unusual artistic values. Therefore, we felt, they merit an important place not only in the history of American art but in the history of world art as well. Such an exalted appraisal, we realized, was not generally acknowledged, and we did not think it could be until a comprehensive collection of these paintings was made available for the general public to see and for art historians, students, and critics to evaluate. It was then that we decided to assemble such a collection and give it to the nation. From that time on we were not just collecting for our Maryland home but with an art museum in mind.

We are delighted that the collection is going to the National Gallery of Art in Washington and that the paintings will be so extensively exhibited. Selections from the collection will be on view at the Gallery at all times and special exhibitions will be held, each devoted to a particular type of art, such as oils, watercolors, pastels, miniatures. In addition, groups of paintings will be made available to museums in this country and abroad for loan exhibitions.

Such a far-reaching program should bring American primitive paintings from our collection to the greatest possible number of people here at home and abroad. Our hope is that this will be the case and that the paintings will be enjoyed by every one who sees them. After all, the true measure of the worth of any art is the extent to which it is enjoyed.

— EDGAR WILLIAM AND BERNICE CHRYSLER GARBISCH

# Paintings for the People

BY ALICE WINCHESTER

In putting a name to their collection Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch have selected the one most widely applied to similar pictures and most generally understood. The varied labels — provincial, artisan, amateur, folk art, and the like — that have been used in the attempt to define or describe this native art has confused as much as it has clarified. Now that the Garbisch collection goes to the National Gallery of Art as American primitive painting, this term will no doubt be generally accepted, and it will be refreshing to have the nomenclature, at least, thus simplified.

For the pictures themselves are simple. That is one of their great attractions to the growing numbers of people who enjoy them. They were painted by and for men and women who were unfamiliar with the art of the world, its great traditions and its subtleties. They have their own conventions and complexities but they were readily comprehensible in their day. So are they still today — particularly if we avoid the temptation to complicate them with erudite analysis and ambiguous interpretation.

Any art must be seen on its own terms and in relation to its own environment to be understood. The background that produced these early American pictures is not hard to read in the pictures themselves. Whether or not their painters were unschooled or self-taught, the pictures at least are unstudied. They have an immediacy and a directness that are striking, so striking that they have been seen as an expression of the independent American spirit and patriotic implications have sometimes been confused with aesthetic importance.

It is significant that most of the collectors and students of this early American art have approached it through a prior interest in antiques, though it was "discovered" some thirty years ago by painters and patrons of modern art. And most of the writing about it has been done by people who, like myself, are neither art critics nor art historians. These pictures are indeed antiques, in much the same sense as a pine settle or a pewter porringer or a Bennington teapot. Whether

painted by artisans or amateurs, by professionals or schoolgirls, they represent the craft tradition that was followed also by carvers and pewterers and potters. Moreover, even more eloquently than the furnishings of homes, they help to tell us how our ancestors lived and what sort of people they were. While they lack photographic realism, they give an astonishing sense of reality. The portraits, scenes, and genre pictures are a vivid record of life as it was at the time they were painted. In other ways, the imaginative and decorative subjects are no less revealing.

In the generation since these examples of American art began to interest collectors they have been explained and excused, discussed and dismissed, evaluated and re-evaluated. Many early misconceptions about the pictures and their painters have been corrected as research has gradually replaced legend. "Anonymous" artists have been given names, "self-taught amateurs" have been identified as trained professionals. The diversity of pictures has been classified in logical groups, related in subject or technique. What was once claimed to be an art unique to this country is now recognized as the American manifestation of a popular artistic expression common to many countries at the time.

With this brave show of knowledge, however, the subject may not be considered closed. On the contrary, it is about to pass beyond the limited group who have been fostering it, to the American people whose art it is. Through the generosity of Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch, their collection of early American paintings now takes its place beside the art masterpieces of the world in our National Gallery of Art.

A hundred pictures from the Garbisch collection of fifteen times that many have been selected for illustration on these pages and for discussion by specialized authorities. They are a mere sampling — in statistical terms less than seven per cent of the whole collection. But they are more than sufficient to convey the spirit of the collection, and of the two collectors who have formed it.



EMILY EASTMAN LOUDÉN: A New England Lady  
Watercolor. c. 1825. New Hampshire



# Portrait Gallery of Provincial America

BY FRANK O. SPINNEY

To today's lover of American primitive art, it must seem that one of the unwritten provisions of the glorious new Federal Constitution of 1789 was that every man might have his portrait painted and any man might paint it. The resulting artistic Gold Rush of the post-Revolutionary era died out only when the supreme court of popular judgment rendered a verdict in favor of M. Daguerre's impersonal chemistry as official artist to the people.

The five or six decades between the achievement of Independence and the Civil War witnessed a democratization of art that penetrated to every village and farm. Society was fluid, a cauldron of new and old faces and ideas bubbling up as luck and ability stirred the mixture and new-felt freedoms kept the pot boiling. More flexibly than ever before individuals moved about geographically as well as socially and economically. Portrait painters and subjects together reflected a new energy, confidence, and mobility.

The sitters were everybody, of every step in the social ladder, from shirt-sleeved cobbler to successful merchant or local divine, from infant in arms to octogenarian aunt. A little stiffly they sometimes posed, perhaps through self-consciousness, or does it perhaps only seem so because of the artist's untrained hand? Many sitters were countrymen — farmers, their wives and children. The country squire and his wife, the storekeeper, the local craftsman uncomfortable in his best suit of clothes, his spouse in finery possibly existing only on the canvas or panel as a flattering service of the artist, all welcomed the itinerant painter come to paint their likenesses.

Even in the towns, the atmosphere was somewhat rural. The nation was predominantly agricultural in the heyday of the popular portrait. For every four on the farm or in the village, only one person lived in Boston, New York, Philadelphia or some secondary urban center. Many city

dwellers were recent arrivals, "country" still in background and spirit. An artist such as William Matthew Prior, who might pack his wagon with canvases for a summer's commission-seeking trip through the country districts, would return to his city studio in the fall and scarcely notice a change in the character of his sitters. And most of the sitters remain as anonymous as their painters. There was no need to record their names for the relatives who would hang the likenesses — no need at least for a generation or two, until the portrait should descend to the daughter-in-law of a third cousin who would give it away when she cleaned out the attic.

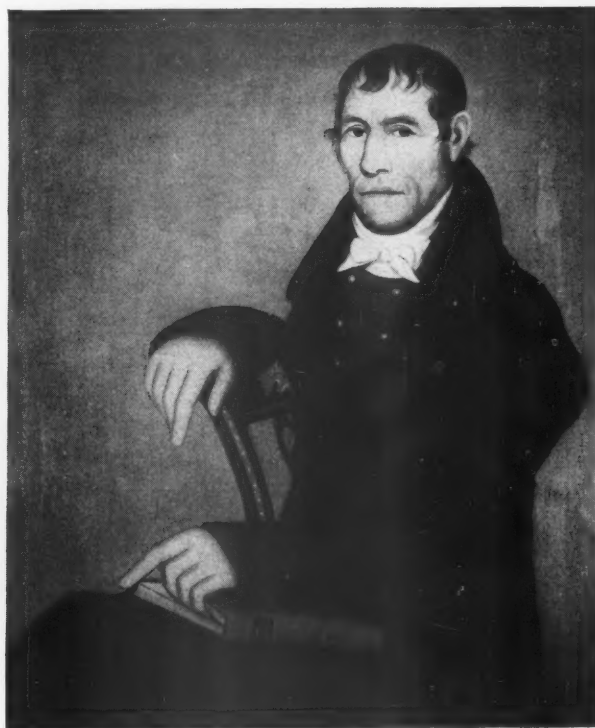
The painters who recorded this group portrait of middle and sometimes lower class America fit into no neat pattern. Most were professionals only in the sense that they took pay for what many looked upon as a trade. They emerged from every sort of background and level of society. There is no predicting where lightning or talent may strike, into what locality or family there will be born a Joseph Davis or an Ellsworth (see illustrations). Conditions of the trade favored men. An occasional Mary Ann Willson or Deborah Goldsmith might win local or itinerant acceptance as a paid professional, but for the most part women of talent did not think of making a career of portrait painting. The work of some feminine amateurs, such as Ruth Henshaw Bascom, who made scores of profiles in central Massachusetts in the 1820's and 30's (see illustration), compares favorably with that of men who made likenesses for their livelihood.

As individual artists shed their cloaks of anonymity with the help of present day research, certain similarities appear. First, obviously, is the accidental fact of talent and its insistent demand for expression. It is obvious, too, that there was not enough talent to go around. For every portrait compelling respect- [continued on page 154]





General Schumacker and Daughter. Pen and watercolor. c. 1810. Pennsylvania



Alice and Joseph Slade. Oil. 1816. New York



Miss Dennison. Oil. c. 1775. Connecticut



Catharine Hendrickson  
Oil. c. 1770. New Jersey



Susanna Truax  
Oil. 1730. Hudson River Valley



J. BRADLEY: Little Girl in Lavender Dress  
Oil. c. 1830. New York

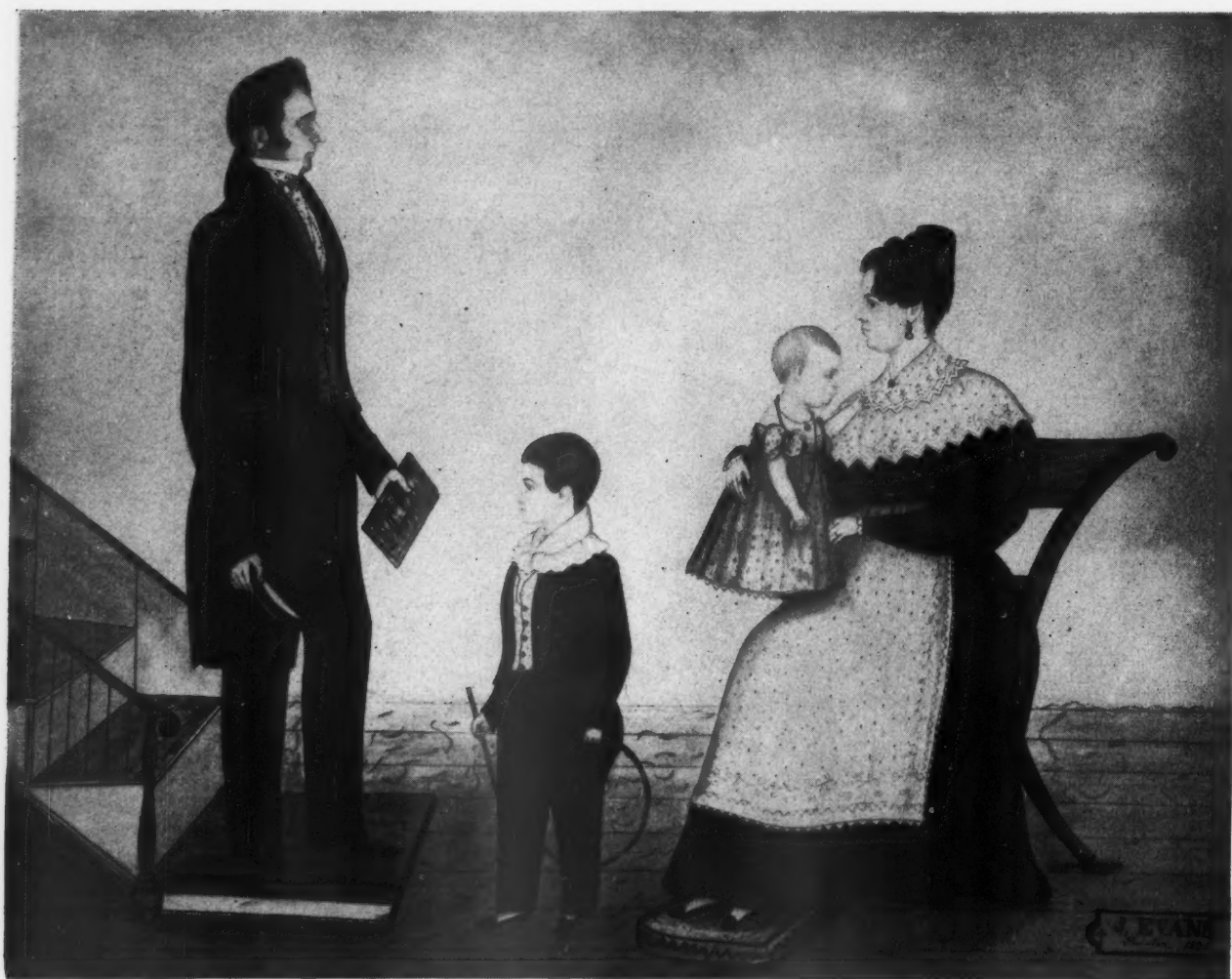


Portrait of a Lady  
Oil. c. 1840. Connecticut





J. B. Sheldon and Mrs. Sheldon. Oil on wood. c. 1825. Ohio



J. EVANS: Family Group. Watercolor. 1832. New Hampshire





WILLIAM MATTHEW PRIOR: *The Burnish Sisters*  
Oil. 1854. New York



JAMES SANFORD ELLSWORTH  
*Deacon and Mrs. Beers*  
Watercolor. c. 1850. Connecticut



Young Lady with Rose  
Watercolor. 1809. Pennsylvania



Adeline Harwood  
Oil. c. 1820. Vermont



Miss Arnold of Westfield  
Oil on wood. c. 1830. Massachusetts



RUTH HENSHAW BASCOM: D. Laurens Thompson  
Pastel cutout. c. 1825. Massachusetts



Katharine and Joseph Kintzel. Watercolor. c. 1850. Pennsylvania



JOSEPH H. DAVIS: John and Abigail Montgomery. Watercolor. 1836. New Hampshire



# Inhabited Landscapes

BY JAMES THOMAS FLEXNER

One of the most venerable and widely accepted fallacies concerning the history of American art is the belief, common for more than a century, that landscape painting did not exist on these shores until the appearance, during the 1820s, of the Hudson River School. Like most errors, this conclusion contains a grain of truth, but the grain has been enlarged as if seen through a microscope.

The earliest known American paintings were created in the 1660s. From this date on past the end of the eighteenth century, official thought all over the western world was concentrated on

man in his social aspects. Accepted philosophy did not find God in Nature, but saw Him standing apart, judging nature. To be untamed was synonymous with being evil. Humanity was not admissible into a drawing room or into heaven until it had been made over by correct religious principle, polite breeding, and wise aristocratic government. Nature too needed editing, came to its own when modified into a formal garden.

The highest form of art, it was generally agreed, was "historical painting," the organization on canvas of figure compositions illustrative, according to refined mental principles, of human heroism,



Twenty-two Houses and a Church. Oil. c. 1840. New York



Mahantango Valley Farm. Oil. c. 1860. Pennsylvania

piety, or grandeur. Although portraiture was also dedicated to the glorification of social man, it was not considered part of the grand tradition because it could go only a short distance towards the "ideal" without loss of that essential factor, likeness. However, it was the most lucrative of modes and thus widely practiced.

Landscape painting lacked official philosophical support, the more so the more it revealed the world uncorrected by human taste. Thus, in his celebrated *Discourses*, Sir Joshua Reynolds attacked Rubens for reproducing "the accidents of nature," preferred Claude for being "convinced that taking nature as he found it seldom produced beauty." Applying the same generalizing principles as the historical painters, Claude sought "ideal form," but Reynolds could not help wondering "whether landscape painters have a right to aspire so far." Firmly he classed the mode as

a minor one; with this ruling the leading academicians of other nations agreed. Although landscape painting continued to be practiced, it was admired only grudgingly, and then when the naturalism of the Dutch and Flemish painters was subordinated to the more artificial formulas of Claude.

Genre painting that dealt with life as it was actually lived was even lower in the scale, since it showed man not in a reformed state but acting out his natural cussedness. It was, Reynolds explained, "a little style, where petty effects are the sole end." The originals of Hogarth's majestic genre scenes were unsaleable to the connoisseurs; Hogarth made his living from engravings sold to a less exalted public, who were glad to see depicted the villainy of a well-bred rake, the virtue of an industrious apprentice.

Revolutionary forces were on the move. Resent-

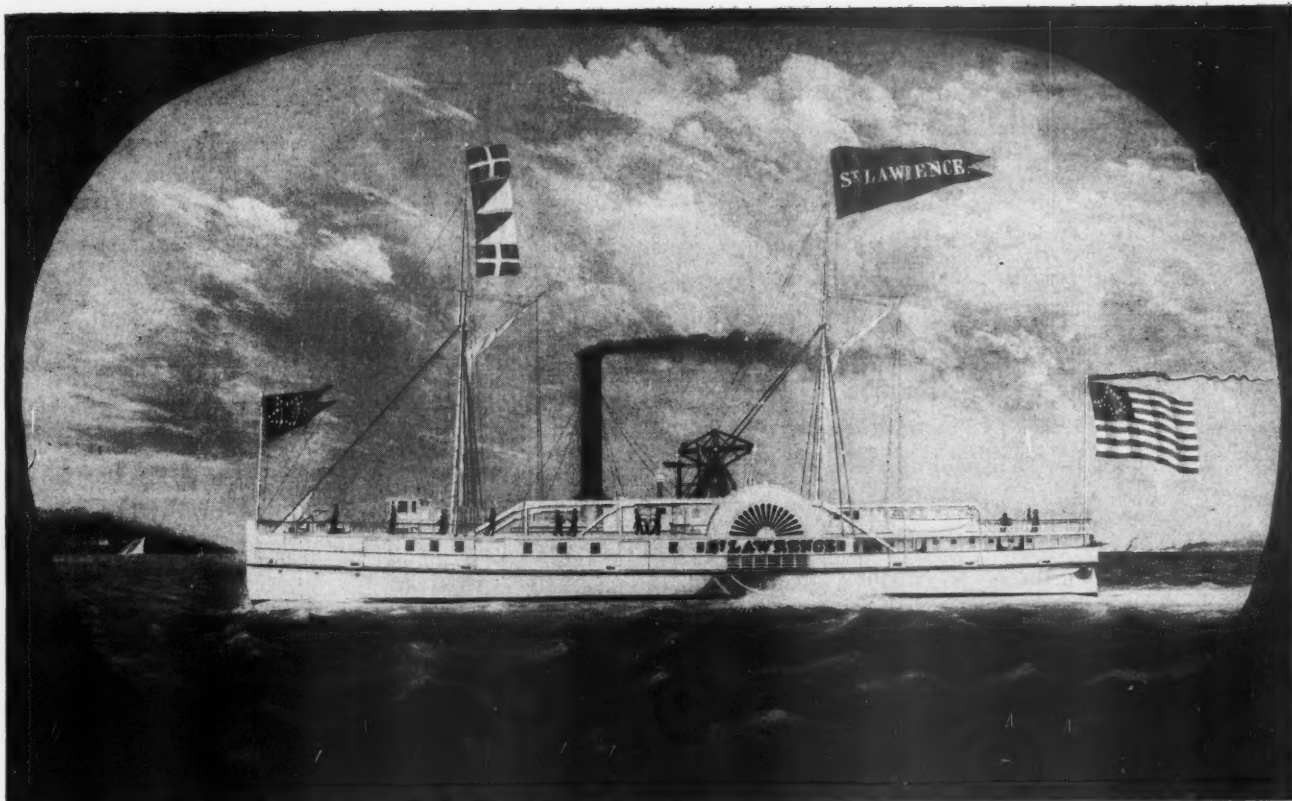


The Regatta. Oil. c. 1850. Massachusetts



THOMAS CHAMBERS: Gibraltar. Oil. c. 1840. New York





JAMES BARD: Steamer *St. Lawrence*. Oil. c. 1850. New York



Village on River. Oil on oilcloth. c. 1860. Vermont

ing aristocratic domination, the rising middle classes insisted that they did not need to be molded. Far from being born evil, man had been corrupted by evil social institutions. Man was naturally good and so was the world. God revealed Himself in ordinary human actions, in the landscape He had made with His own hands.

Despite official disapproval, activity in landscape and genre painting mounted everywhere to answer an augmenting bourgeois demand. From the first, basically a middle-class nation, America was no exception. In seventeenth century New York, Dr. Jacob de Lange hung in his "great chamber" four genre pieces and ten landscapes; this was only a fraction of his collection. When Nathaniel Emmons, the earliest American painter known to have been native-born, died in 1740, he was praised for his "admirable imitations of nature, both in faces, rivers, banks, and rural scenes." At the first American group exhibition, the Columbianum held at Philadelphia in 1795, almost as many artists showed landscape and genre works as showed portraits. Such examples

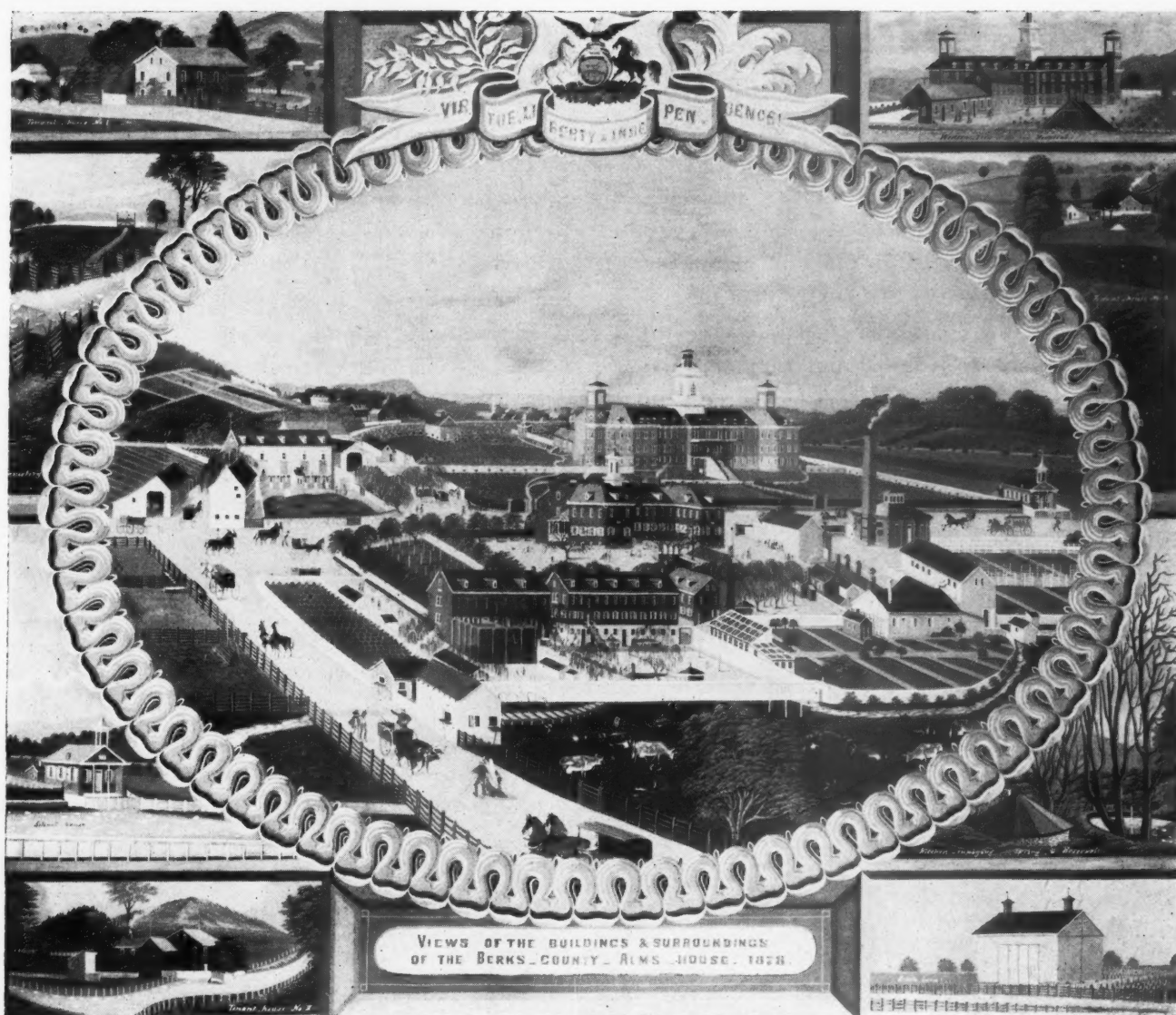
could be cited indefinitely.

Since this interest arose from the people, it was in America, as elsewhere, intimately associated with the most popular of graphic arts, engraving. Such overmantles as *The Plantation* were influenced by imported wall-paper designs. Easel landscapes and watercolor views were often made, even by humble painters, to be reproduced; artisan and amateur painters tended to follow the preconceptions of the print-maker. In drawing schools and books of art instruction, the English immigrants who were the most conspicuous of our late eighteenth and early nineteenth century landscape painters disseminated both the iconography and the basic technical approach of aquatint engraving.

There were exceptions, but from the first American views that were not decorations painted directly on walls, paid lip-service to accepted doctrines by having as their ostensible subjects aspects of man's remodelling of nature — a city or a mansion — but these elements were pushed into the backgrounds. In the foregrounds, no sharp



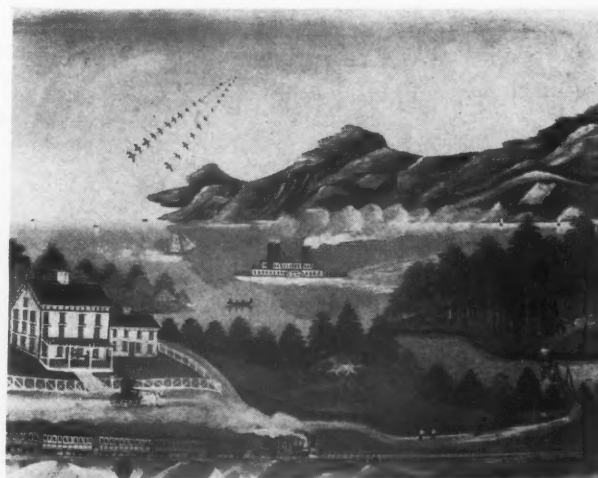
The Plantation. Oil on wood. c. 1825. Louisiana



CHARLES HOFMAN: Berks County Alms House. Oil on zinc, 1878. Pennsylvania

line was drawn between the two aspects of the new piety: interest in nature and interest in ordinary human life. Pictures were alive with genre: workmen at their tasks or the proprietors of the private houses depicted strolling at their ease. All was embedded in landscape and increasingly the artists sought to render nature as she appeared to their eyes. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, an interest in the wilder aspects of scenery became manifest. Thus the legend accompanying an engraving of Jacob Hoffman's *View on the Mushanon River* (1797) stated, "No quarter of the world, however celebrated, affords more novel and sublime scenes than are to be met with among the romantic wilds of America."

When, as the nineteenth century unrolled, romanticism triumphed in [continued on page 156]



LEILA T. BAUMAN: Geese in Flight  
Oil, c. 1850. New Jersey



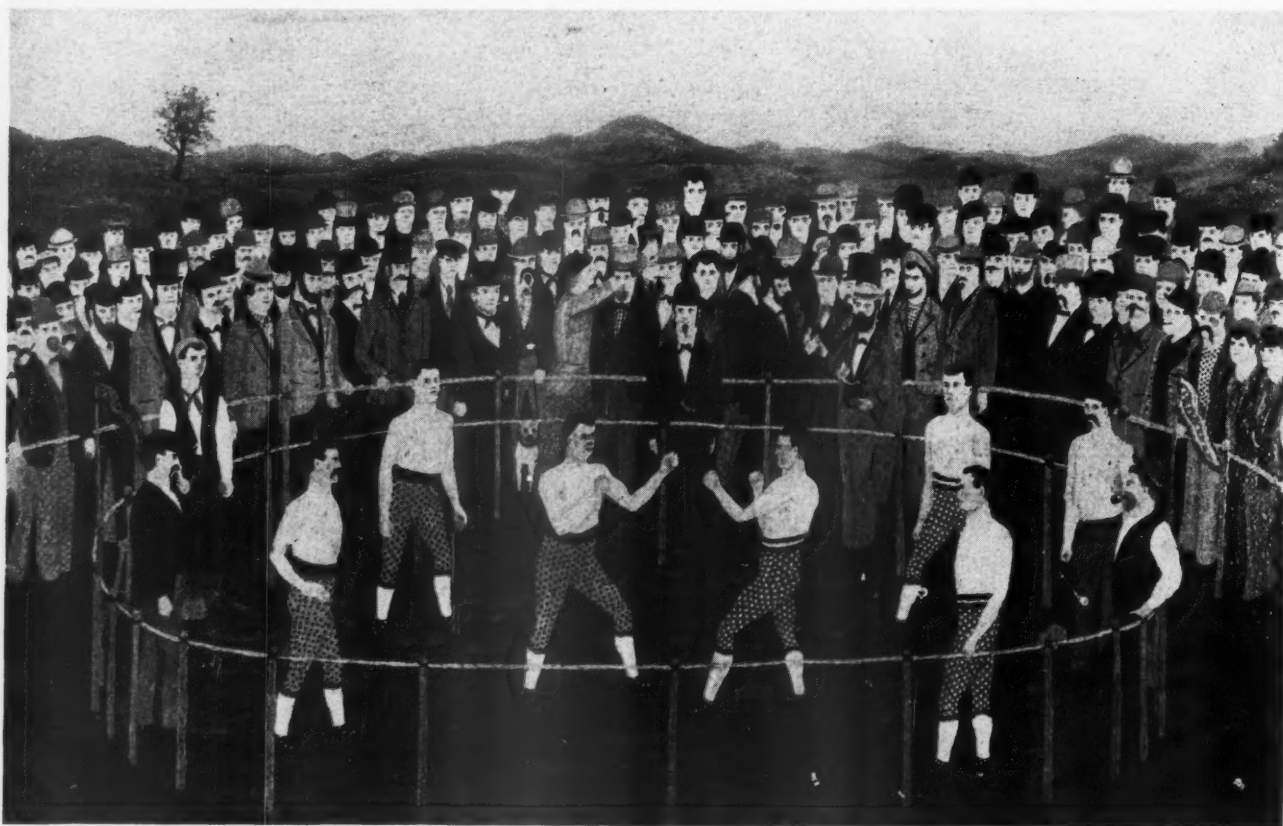
# Daily Life of the American Folk

BY LOUIS C. JONES

The number of surviving primitive genre pictures is proportionately far fewer than other types of early art in this country and the number of really first-rate pictures is small indeed. One wonders why the non-academic painters of the nineteenth century eschewed the simple, active scenes of everyday life while producing so many landscapes and portraits, this during a period when academic painters were creating a sophisticated taste for the genre. There are a number of possible answers, but no sure one. Perhaps untrained artists found these energetic scenes difficult to paint and shied away from the challenge. Another possibility is that they were painted, but not cherished by succeeding generations who found them neither interesting nor aesthetically satisfying, and the reasons of pride and sentiment were lacking which caused portraits and landscapes and memorials to be tucked away in the

attic. It may be that by the second third of the century when other forms of primitive art were thriving, the need for genres was being amply and ably supplied by the publications of Currier and Ives; the popular excellence of these may have discouraged original compositions. Whatever the reasons, primitive genres are hard to come by in our time, and generalizations must be based on all too small a group of pictures.

On the other hand, it ought to be pointed out that little scenes of folk activity crop up as minor and incidental themes in a great variety of primitive pictures of other types. In the background of many a portrait and conversation piece, in the minor details which enrich the farmscapes and townscapes, in the decorative scenes on sleighs, fire engines, band wagons, in the carvings on powder horns and scrimshaw, in the amateur illustrations of letters and logs we find unexpected little



Bare Knuckles. Oil on artist board. c. 1860. New York



Victory Parade. Watercolor. c. 1790. Ohio



W. H. BROWN: Bareback Riders. Oil on cardboard. 1886. Michigan

records, some of them strikingly forceful, which fulfill all the requirements of this type, but which we tend to overlook in our concentration on the dominant elements of the piece.

When we turn to those pictures which do fall unmistakably into the category of primitive genre we find that they run to rural life, outdoor life. While there are a few urban and a few interior scenes, by and large these pictures are based on the life of farm folk, villagers, and frontiersmen. There is such a range in the technical skills and creative spirit represented that it is impossible to generalize about the artistic qualities of these pictures, but seen from the viewpoint of the social historian they are consistently valuable records of life in an earlier America.

A large percentage of them is concerned with the good times of country life, the times which brought widely separated folk together for a holiday. Picnics are a favorite theme and dances and the semi-comic marchings of militia day, the som-

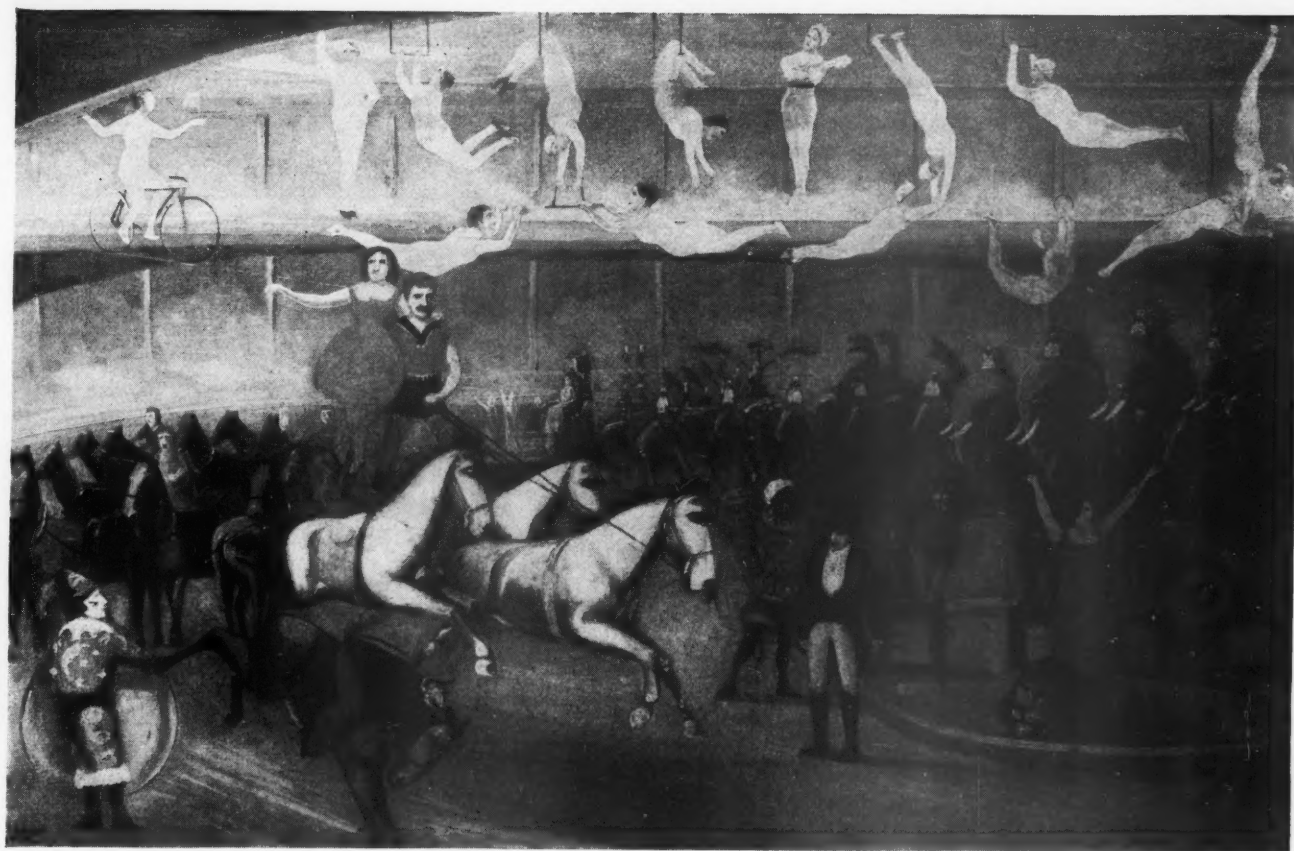
ber pleasures of funerals and hangings, the exultant joys of hunting 'coons and riding to the hounds. Some painters, like Olaf Krans and Linton Park, whose flax-scutching scene is illustrated, chose subjects from the turning points in the farmer's year, sowing and harvesting, while others chose fires, bees, circuses, shops and workshops. An important lot of genre paintings was unearthed by Marshall Davidson for *Life in America* depicting frontier scenes, life on the rivers and emigrant trails, life at sea and in the far-off ports American sailors knew so well.

The implication of the above is that these artists, amateurs and craftsmen, looked at the world around them and reported it. This was frequently true, but by no means always so. We know, for example, that a fair share derive their inspiration from prints — including the notable *Quilting Bee* at the Metropolitan. Research yet to be done will unquestionably find that posters, advertisements, wood cuts, and book illustrations provided others





The End of the Hunt. Oil. c. 1780. Virginia



A. LOGAN: The Circus. Oil. 1874. New York

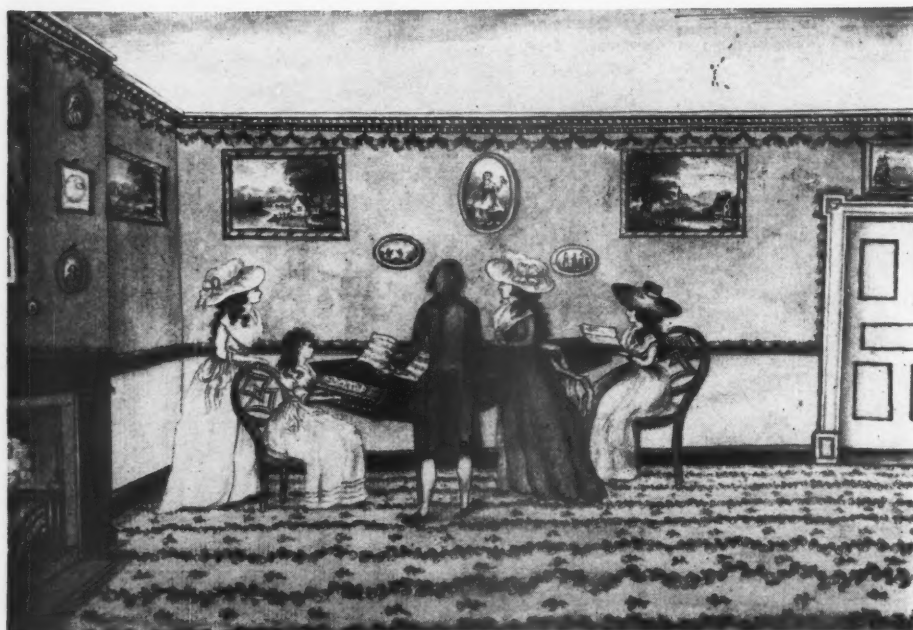


Pictorial Record of a New York Family  
Oil. c. 1825. New Jersey



The Picnic  
Watercolor. c. 1815. Massachusetts

Piano Recital  
Watercolor. c. 1800. New Hampshire





The Sargent Family. Oil. 1800. Massachusetts

of these untrained artists with guidance and inspiration.

But the most interesting pictures in this group — indeed, this is equally true throughout the gamut of non-academic art — are those which give us the impression of deriving directly from observation and the experiences of life. Granting that one can always be fooled by a specific picture, there is, nevertheless, a different vitality and freshness that derives from first-hand experience. This is an intangible quality and, unfortunately, the more immediately one is aware of its presence, the more immediately one is also aware of the fact that the field is mined with booby traps. But the final conclusion is that the best of our folk art is seldom directly imitative or comprehensibly derivative.

A case in point is Linton Park's *Flax-scutching Bee* (frontispiece) — a picture I would happily

steal for Fenimore House. This is a great document in the sense that de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* or Melville's *Moby Dick* are great documents. The social historian recognizes this as a work of art but he also sees in it primary information about fences, windows, roofs, chimneys, outhouses, barns, farmyard arrangement, the cutting of trees, the use of the flax brake and the scutch, frontier dogs and the clothing of men, women and boys. Park has offered us a suite of the moods and humor of thirty-odd people at an American frontier bee — the frolic, the lovemaking, the earnestness, the ribaldry, the work and play of the pioneers. This artist was there and he sees to it that you, too, are there: the mood is transferred. The artist is the only intermediary between the experience and you. The experience is not diluted and the artist's whole effort is to make [continued on page 158]



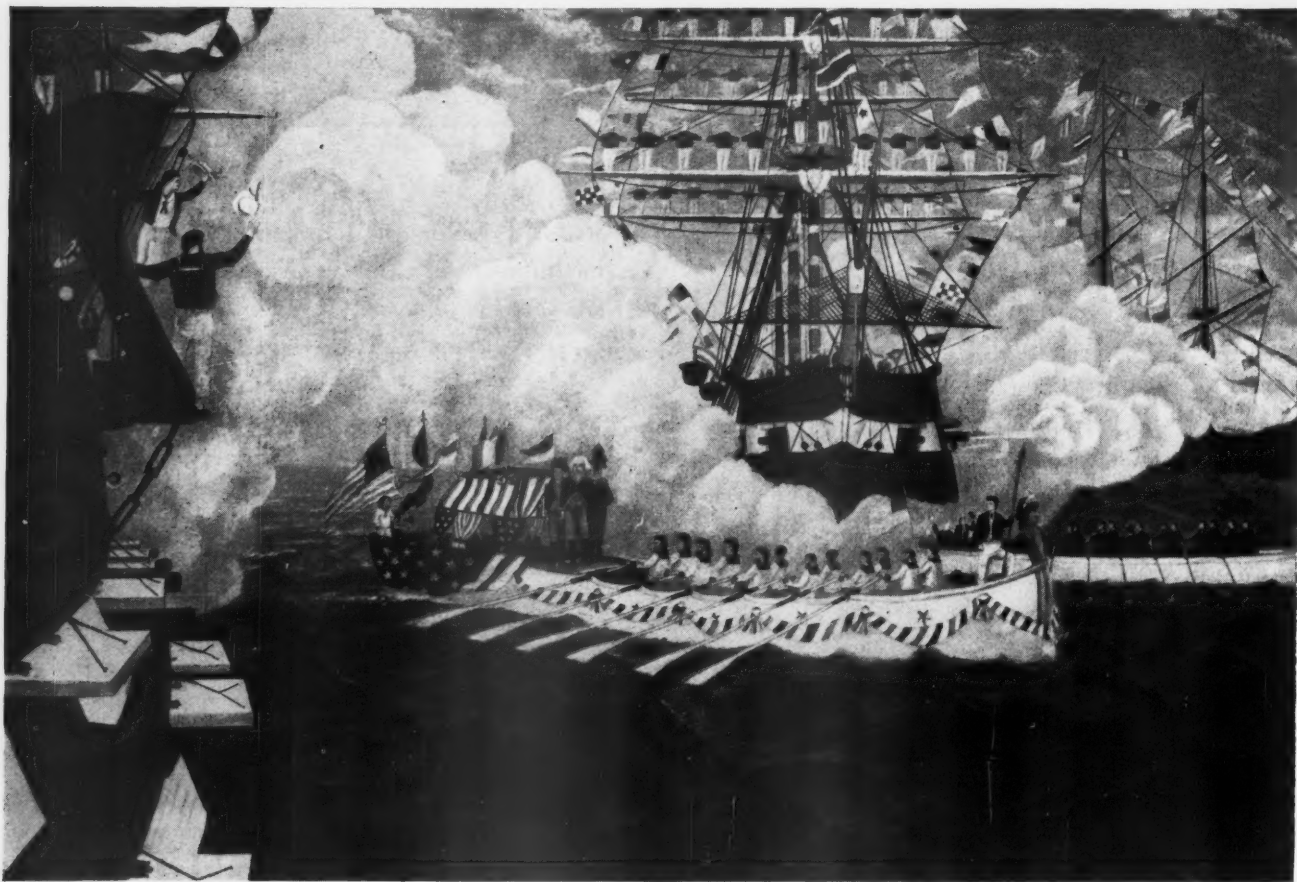
# Colloquial History Painting

BY VIRGIL BARKER

From the first, the American colonists could see beyond the practical usefulness of the sign-boards to the social usefulness of portraits and, rather than do without these, they accepted what they could get from the sign-painters. In the course of time they advanced beyond the social usefulness of portraits to the spiritual usefulness of simple pleasure in pictures; and here again the sign-painters were the first to satisfy this purer liking. For their work had in it imagery as well as lettering, and with their panel paintings the art gallery of the streets and taverns was brought into the home alongside the portraits. When the people in those homes wanted to try their hands at making their own pictures, such examples were the models nearest at hand and such workmen were the nearest source of whatever personal in-

struction they might seek. Before the end of the eighteenth century the artisan and amateur were joined in the production of an art which was to become a major factor in the nineteenth.

The use of "primitive" as the characterizing word for this body of work has of course required a fresh definition of it to fit the conditions, in the United States and elsewhere, under which this kind of vision has manifested itself in the industrial age. The arts of primitive societies have preserved primitive emotions, but they have done that by means of highly traditional and sophisticated techniques. The primitive painters of the archaic phase in renaissance Europe initiated both a vision and a technique which were prolonged into a highly complex tradition. The artisan and amateur painting of this country did neither of



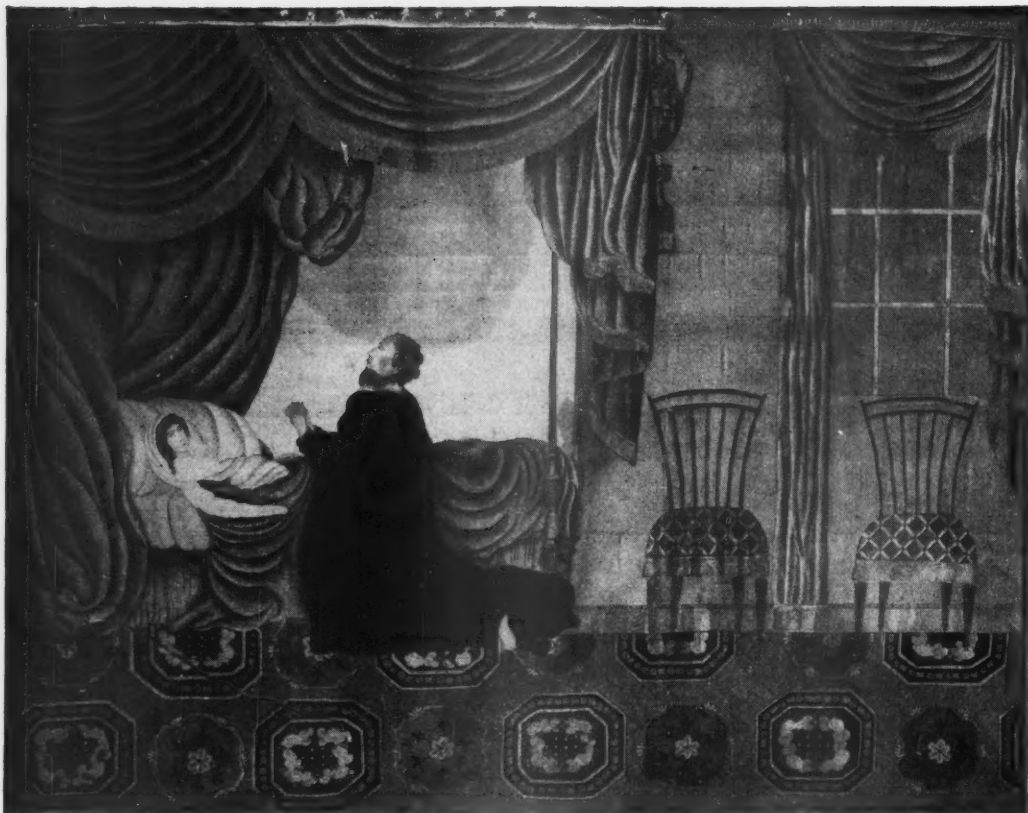
L. M. COOKE: Salute to General Washington in New York Harbor. Oil. c. 1875. New York



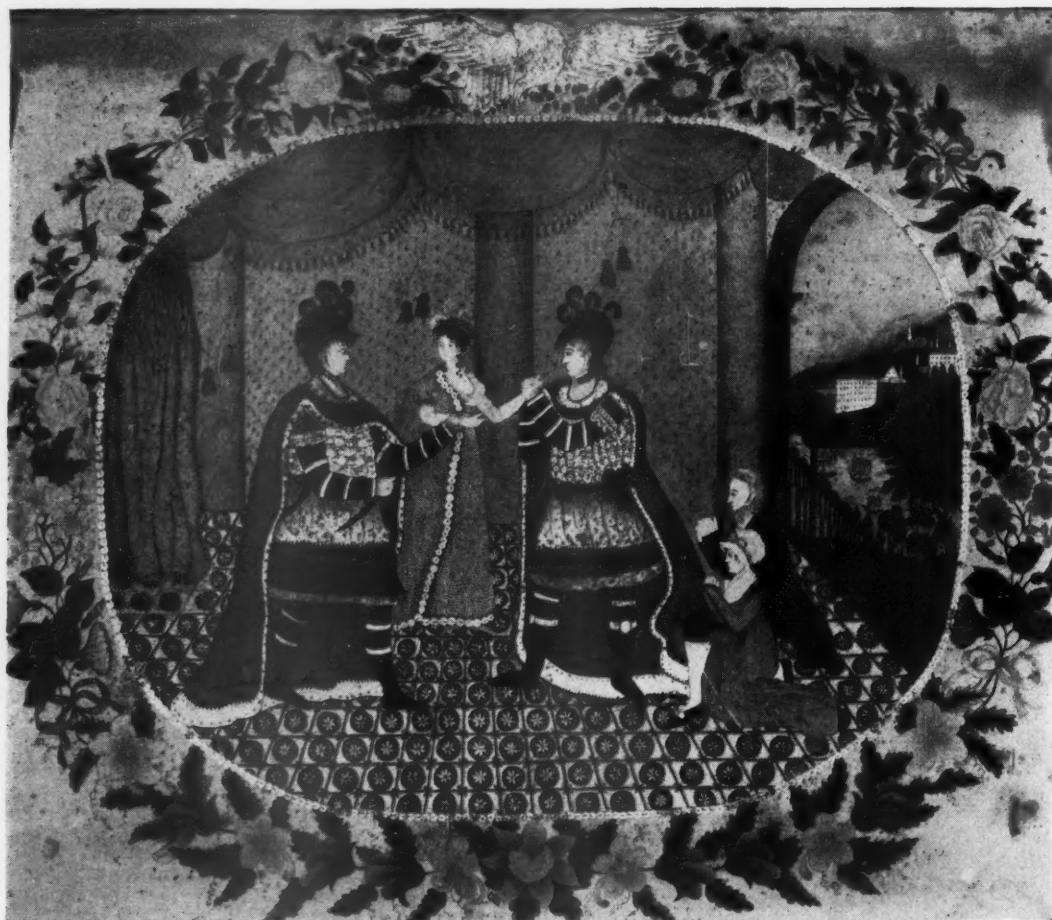
EDWARD HICKS: Peaceable Kingdom. Oil. c. 1830. Pennsylvania



Aurora  
Oil on wood. c. 1830. Connecticut



Jesus Healing the Daughter of Jairus. Watercolor on satin. c. 1810. New York



The Warrior's Return. Watercolor on silk. c. 1810. Massachusetts





JOHN LANDIS: Adam and Eve. Watercolor. c. 1830. Pennsylvania



EMILY PATTON: Jephthah Laments His Rash Vows. Watercolor. c. 1830. Pennsylvania

those things. It gave a technically clumsy but expressive embodiment to concepts neither primitive nor archaic but essentially middle-class, usually more advanced in idea than the techniques could cope with but oftentimes saved by an instinctive pictorial sagacity. This innocence also preserved it through its later time of increasing dependence upon the studio professionalism as this type of work strengthened itself by continuous importations from Europe. Such dependence was less the direct one of receiving instruction than the indirect one of using the productions (usually in the form of reproductions) of the academic minds as source-material.

This is nowhere more noticeable than in the miscellany which, on both levels, was comprised under the term "history painting." Even before the return here of West's pupils, Americans had accepted the European concept of history as embracing every subject which the academic mind thought worthy of imaginative interpretation —

allegory, mythological and sacred stories, episodes from secular literature, and actual events, ancient or modern, of sufficient significance to rouse improving emotions in the human heart. The same comprehensiveness was practised by the American primitives, but their different technical procedures and mental attitudes suggest the enlargement of the descriptive term into "colloquial history painting."

In the depiction of actual events there was a spurt of professed eye-witness accounts in the propaganda prints of the revolutionary war, but over the whole history of history painting such attempts have been scarce. Only a little more frequent were such approximations to factualism as those by Ralph Earl and Amos Doolittle when they visited Lexington and Concord soon after the battles there. In spite of the relative immediacy of American history, far the greater number of the paintings dealing with it were made by people who, reading about its events or seeing others'



EDWARD HICKS: Declaration of Independence. Oil. c. 1840. Pennsylvania



EUNICE PINNEY: *The Cotters Saturday Night*  
Watercolor. c. 1815. Connecticut

pictures of them, were moved to contribute something of their own to the accumulating patriotic mythology increasingly centered upon a few emergent national heroes. Thus all divisions of colloquial history painting came to manifest the same twofold derivativeness — bookish sources for subject and frequent pictorial sources for composition.

In the latter kind of indebtedness it is not usual to find so complete a use of another man's picture as Hicks' redaction of the print after Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*. As a rule there is a greater degree of modification, such as Hicks himself used in his variations on West's *Penn's Treaty*. An earlier and more fluent illustration may be assumed for Eunice Pinney's *Cotter's Saturday Night*, but surely she herself may be credited with the hallucinated intensity of expression on the three central faces and its echo in cat and dove. Miss Willson's *The Prodigal Son Reclaimed* appears to be a free adaptation (in reverse) of the same subject in Amos Doolittle's 1814 set of four prints.



MARY ANN WILLSON: *The Prodigal Son Reclaimed*  
Watercolor. c. 1820. New York





A. A. LAMB: *Emancipation Proclamation*  
Oil. c. 1865. Pennsylvania

A more complex kind of derivativeness can be analyzed in A. A. Lamb's *Emancipation Proclamation*. The horses, chariot, and symbolical lady charioteer would indicate a professional decorator of fire-engines; the portrait heads and Capitol building would be out of prints; the foreground grass and rocks, the left-hand mass of freedmen, and the distant image after Henry K. Brown's equestrian Washington would be his own visualizations. Intentional imagination is clearly indicated by this very compositeness, but there is no imagination in the actual painting, conditioned as it was by a particularized craft.

On the other hand, the equally routine craft of mid-century portraiture as practised by Erastus Field did not hobble him when he ventured into the freer forms of picture-making, as seen in *The Seventh Plague of Egypt*. The formula of head and shoulders in three-quarter view was useless to him for devising these gesticulations of grief; and even these seem to have been less exciting to him as an experimental painter than the triumphant perspective of this tremendous setting, reminiscent of some lodge-ritual, and the dramatization of the whole by a boldly arbitrary scheme of light.

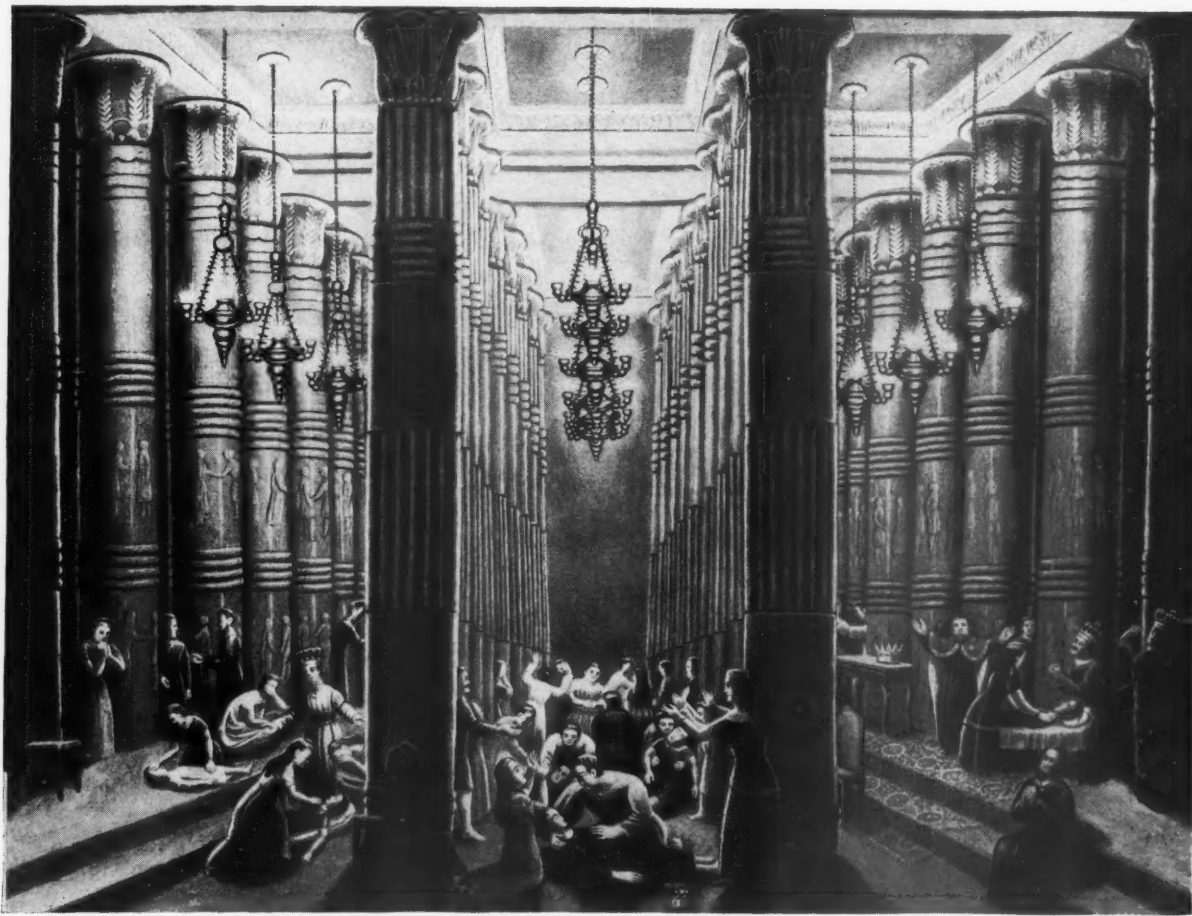
Washington the Mason. Oil. c. 1810. New Jersey



What was just called "instinctive pictorial sagacity" has its most interesting exemplification in the present group in the anonymous *Landing of the Pilgrims*. Blake asked both the lamb and the tiger who made them and let the ambiguous contrast emphasize the mystery. In a similar spirit it may be asked [continued on page 156]



Landing of the Pilgrims. Watercolor. c. 1840. Pennsylvania



ERASTUS SALISBURY FIELD: The Seventh Plague of Egypt. Oil. c. 1840. Massachusetts

# Still Life and Pretty Pieces

BY CARL W. DREPPERD

Our American pioneer and amateur artists were not an untutored and unschooled crew of dabblers in paint and paste. They achieved their instruction by various means all dictated by environmental pressures, and the unbounded courage imparted to all and sundry by new freedoms of mind. Those who were self taught were actually book taught, but often to the book instruction was added the personal services of an itinerant instructor who would set up a short term school wherever there was a settlement of people to provide enough pupils of any and all ages. Further, there is evidence that all private schools, town and country day schools, church schools and boarding schools, included drawing and painting instruction in their curricula. So, instead of being a new nation woefully lacking in facilities for art and drawing instruction we were, instead, a nation deluged with urge and opportunity, and opportunity and urge, to learn how to paint and draw. More often than not the reward of facility was better job and better pay, not for fine art, or painting portraits, but as a decorator of tinware, walls, floors, wagons, carriages, pumps, furniture and other items, or as scribes, architects, and surveyors.

Perhaps the most significant development within the ever growing sense of appreciation in the minds of more and more people for our pioneer and amateur art of other days is the rapid change in the minds of the critics and solons of the world who spell art with a capital A. This can be pointed by two comments, made, one in 1942 and the other in 1952, by an Archbishop of Academic Art whose blushes are spared by preserving his anonymity. In 1942, when I remarked to him that an incalculable amount of art by amateurs had been produced in the United States between 1800 and 1850, and that an amazing quantity had been preserved and was coming to light, he said, "What an indictment on the taste of the Nation, and today's collectors." In 1952 when I said substantially the same thing to him, plus the comment that a good many masterpieces by nobodies

had been found in the pool, his response was: "You are quite right. I would indeed like to have the opportunity to procure many examples from the Halliday-Thomas collection, the Garbisch collection, and the Fenimore House collection at Cooperstown." I am quite sure his change of attitude is not the result of monetary consideration. Rather, I suspect he has restudied the history of fine art of all nations, in all ages, and has discovered it all began by pioneering, was consolidated by a great wave of amateur production, and then pointed by the gifted amateurs into the beginning of fine, academic art.

Among the most popular forms of American art expression were the still life and the decorative picture, sometimes called a "piece." These, as often as not, were achieved by mixed methods, including decoupage, stenciling, and collage. The decoupage was, literally, the trimming of a picture with applied accessories. Collage is a matter of pasting down sections of background and of applying materials other than paint to large and small areas. Stenciling is a method as old as the proverbial hills, designed originally as an aid to repetitive production; of doing the same thing over and over again with only minor variations. Techniques, know-how and all else were governed by environment; the artists contrived to achieve a piece with whatever materials they had available. Thus we find cherry and peach tree saps used as varnish; colors derived from flowers, vegetables and earths; brushes made from feathers, cat's hairs and hog bristles; crayons made from hearth coals and candle-grease. The pictures achieved were indeed a credit to the artists and it is to the eternal credit of those who were here when this art was rediscovered that they preserved it when it began to come forth from attics, barns, cellars, and the rooms of country hotels and village inns.

The influence upon our American social scene exerted by drawing and painting instruction books is only beginning to be appreciated. These instructors did more than tell how to paint; they





Still Life with Watermelon. Watercolor. c. 1830. New York



Bear in Tree. Watercolor. 1850. Texas



**The Dancer**  
Tinsel and oil  
Reverse painting on glass  
c. 1860. Massachusetts

suggested pieces to be painted. They suggested how other pieces could be composed and achieved. Three of the instructors were devoted exclusively to flower painting. Two were devoted to fruit painting. A dozen or more were devoted to figure painting and drawing. A score dealt exclusively with landscape. And then there were "drawing cards" which, issued in packs, or decks, comprised innumerable studies for repainting in all phases of expression: still life, decoration, portraiture, figure work, landscape, and perspective. Some of these instruction books were sold in such numbers that tenth and even twelfth editions were printed. Some cost a few pennies, some sold for many dollars. All of them encouraged painting and drawing. And now we have fallen heir to the paintings, among which are the pieces here exemplified by a few well chosen examples from the Garbisch collection.

To prophesy is not to be without honor, save in your own country. Since honor, according to the bard of Avon, is a name, had by him who died yesterday, one takes no risk whatever in this comment-cum-prediction: these paintings, these pieces, are not as yet halfway to their ultimate pinnacle of appreciation. The examples pictured have much still to say. For example, the watermelon



**Basket of Fruit.** Oil on velvet. c. 1840. Connecticut

and fruits on a tray is catalogued as "Still Life, watercolor, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ " date c. 1830, artist unknown, found in New York." The picture itself has a great deal more to say for itself and its unknown painter. To the initiated it speaks: "I was painted freehand by one who had seen poonah, or theorem work, done by stencil. But my juicy quality is the result of freehand rendering of poonah results. The tray upon which I am based, the fruits, leaves, melon, knife and cherries look as though they were stenciled but they're

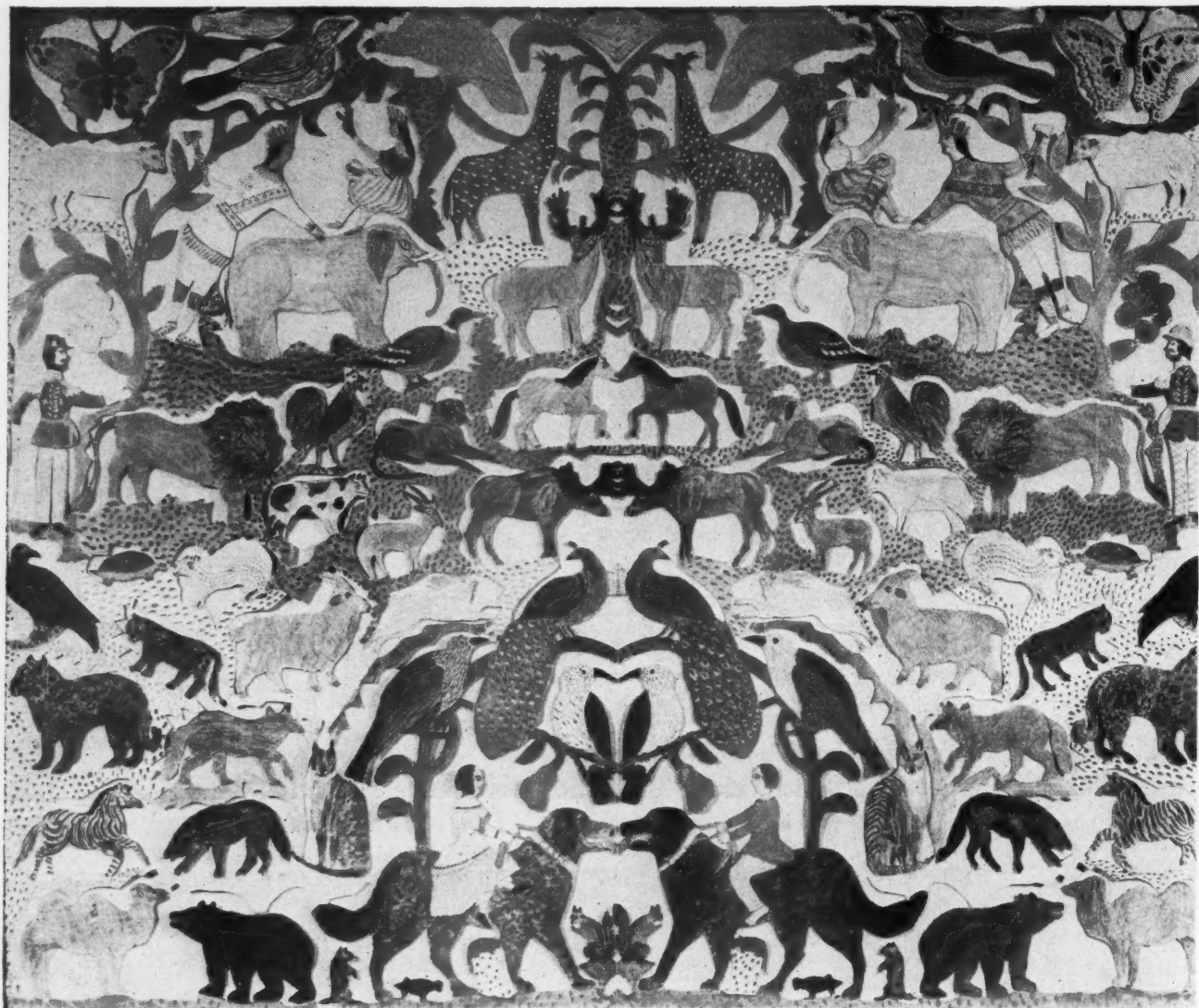


Fruit and Flowers. Oil. c. 1835. Maryland



My Favorites. Oil on velvet. c. 1830. New Jersey



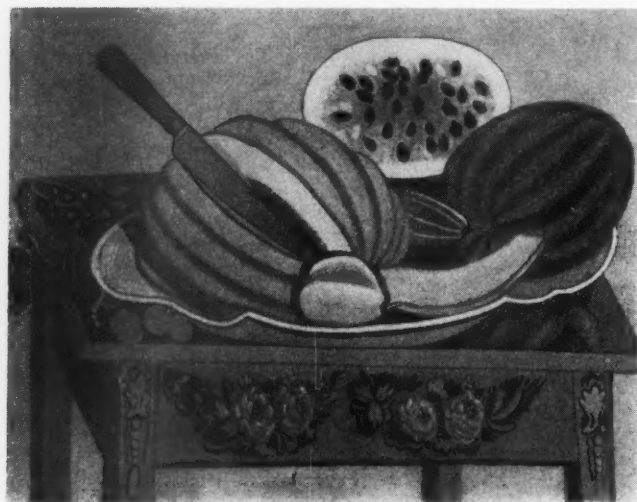


Paradise. Watercolor cutout. c. 1840. Massachusetts



Girl in Striped Yellow Dress  
Watercolor. c. 1825. Massachusetts

Still Life with Melons  
Oil on wood. c. 1830. New York





Bowl of Fruit. Oil. c. 1830. Pennsylvania

freehand art. Look at me well. I am early American amateur art. But I am also the very thing that many modern water colorists have tried to achieve in pieces no better than I, as academic professionals of the modern school."

The Garbisch collection piece catalogued as 49.148 is a Massachusetts opus titled *The Dancer* and made during the era when Fanny Essler and other demoiselles of the ballet were shocking, and delighting, American audiences. This work of art is created from tinsel paper and paint. The inspiration may well have been a picture in Gleason's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*. Who cares whether it was originally made for, or by, the sweetheart of a Harvard man, or for the backbar of Tim's porterhouse, near the Long Wharf?

The pieces titled *Basket of Fruit* and *My Favorites* are lively theorem, poonah, or stencil paintings, on velvet. They were achieved by using many stencils, infinite patience, and a rather good palette of colors. Our early amateur painted by any technique that pleased his fancy and agreed with his purse. In the elaborate Maryland *Fruit and Flowers* a highly talented amateur has combined many elements into an harmonious whole as, perhaps, an overmantel for a mansion. The Massachusetts *Paradise* is delightfully imaginative and at once childish and sophisticated. It is both antique and modern. Which is to say it is ageless. The naiveté of *Girl in Striped Yellow Dress* bespeaks a quite youthful artist but here, again, we could go quite wrong; it may well have been the portrait of the grandchild of the artist.



SALLY PARKER: Shepherdess. Watercolor. 1795. Connecticut

Everybody in America, or so it would seem, was painting in those fabulous, burgeoning years, from Jackson's stunning victory at New Orleans to the tragedy of Fort Sumter.

The *Bowl of Fruit* from Pennsylvania may have been made as an overmantel piece. It is well composed, colorful, pleasing, and emphatically not what has been called Pennsylvania Dutch. Here is the portrayal of an approach to luxury, not too proudly presented, but oh, so quietly boastful. Nice furniture, nice carpet, nice drapery, nice accessories. Nice people. An artist in New York achieved the same result in an entirely different way in the *Still Life with Melons*. Here the painted table valance is as important as the melons and fruit — and is meant to be. That lady from Vermont with the huge bowl of flowers, portrayed in watercolor, has chichi, albeit a bit grimly, as should be, in the state of granite. But the scene is sheer sentiment. One likes to think

she rewarded the artist with, shall we say, a swift kiss? The Pennsylvania piece titled *American Bald Eagle* may or may not be a bald eagle, really, but there are several hundred moderns of some name and fame who, whether they would admit it publicly or not, wish they might do as well. Here is a watercolor painted bit by bit, feather by feather, leaf by leaf. One may well suspect the painter was, or grew up to be, either a top flight fire engine decorator, or a portrait painter. The ability for either is evident.

Having been among the early ones who braved laughter and jibes in evincing great interest in this art, and disagreeing only with its currently popular designation as primitive, I'm no longer even in the mood to say to anyone, "I told you so." None of us who pioneered for this art need say a word more; the pictures now do all the speaking necessary to consolidate their own victory over prides and prejudices.

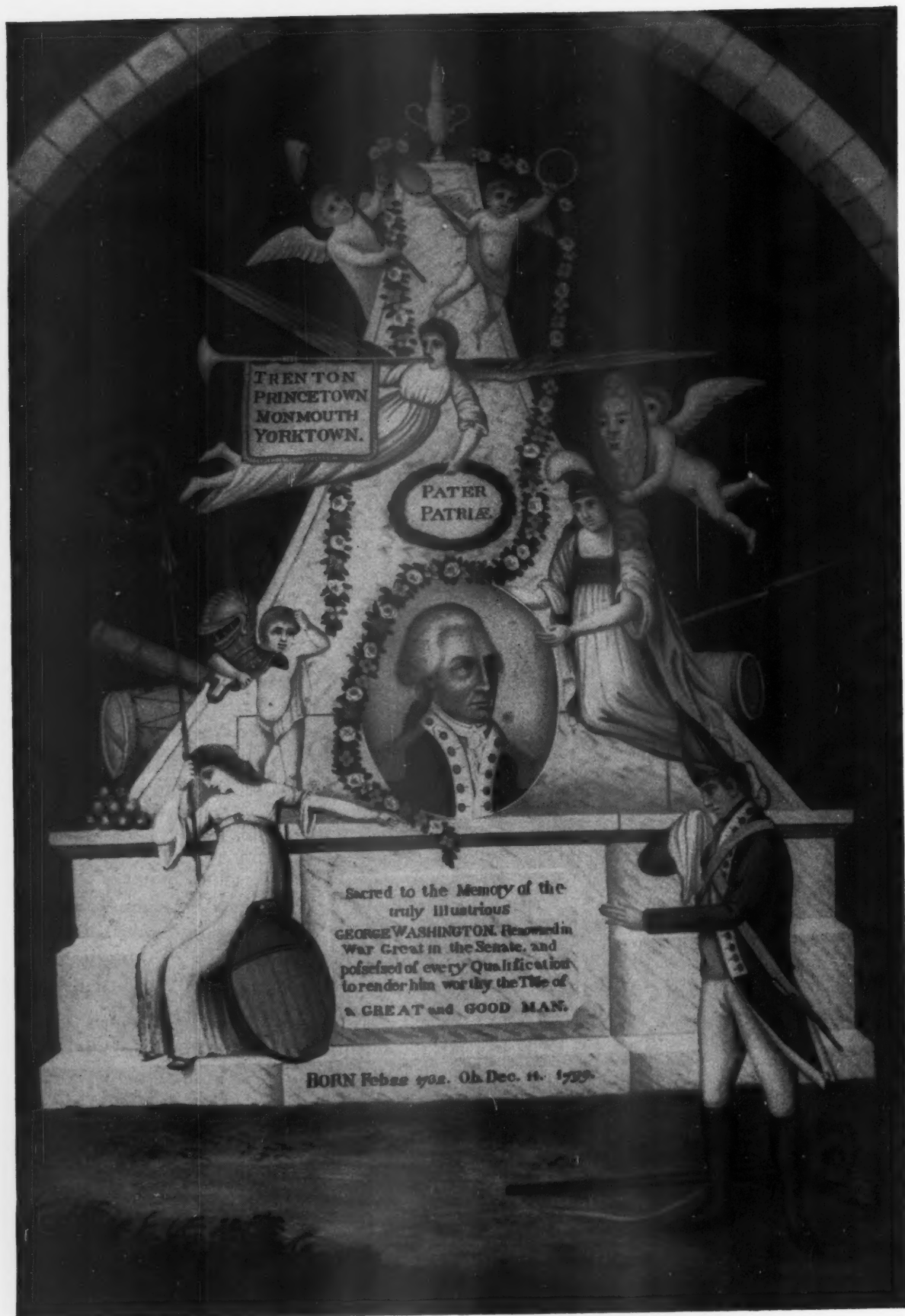




Woman, Flowers and Birds  
Watercolor. c. 1840  
Vermont



American Bald Eagle  
Watercolor. c. 1825  
Pennsylvania



George Washington Memorial. Reverse painting, oil on glass. c. 1800. Massachusetts

# In Memoriam

BY EDITH GREGOR HALPERT

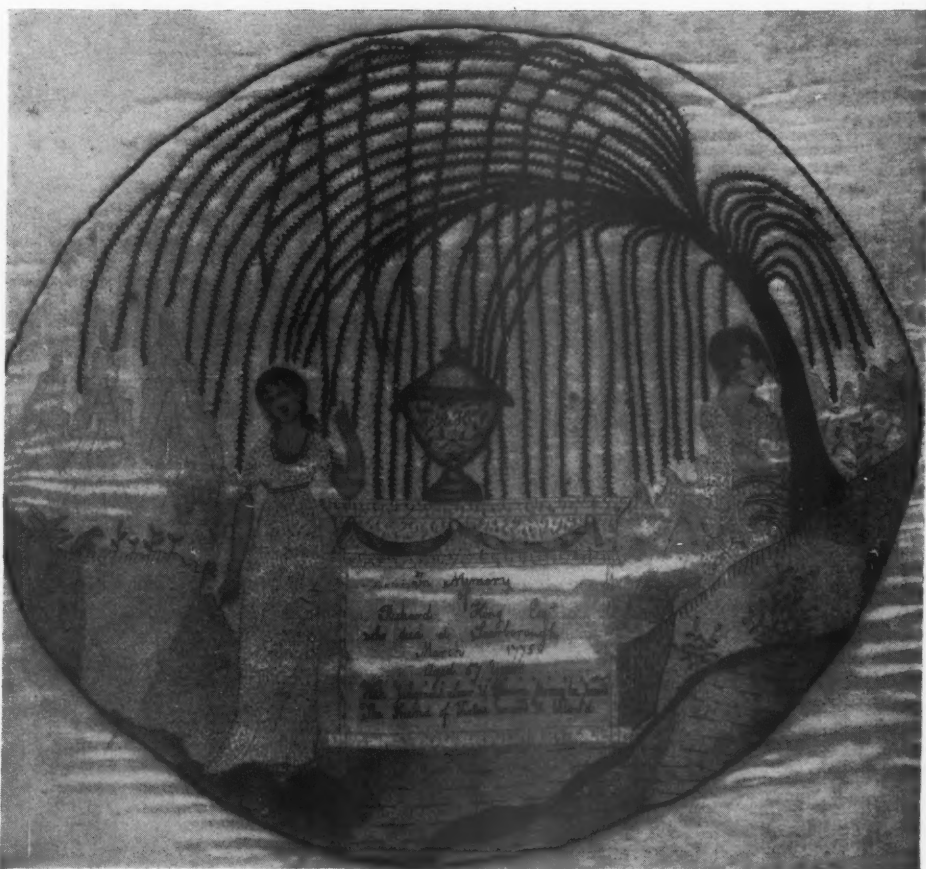
Mourning pictures occupy a singular place in American folk art. In addition to their unusually high aesthetic average, these memorial scenes incorporate almost a complete cross-section of subject matter and medium, and provide a remarkable document for sociological study.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, living conditions and religious convictions imposed a public attitude vastly different from ours. Today we accept the desire for longevity as a perfectly natural manifestation. We support the most extensive research toward increasing the life span, and direct serious attention to geriatrics, retirement plans, pensions, and comfort on earth. It is this very attitude that emphasizes the contrast between our past and the present — not only in scientific development but more sharply in the basic philosophy prevalent during the period of mourning pictures. Then, life was but a prelude to the

grave. Death — not life — was considered man's richest reward, and it was the glorification of this last journey that offered endless opportunities and inspiration for imaginative flights of pictorialization. Death was considered a welcome release from a harsh life, a view so aptly illustrated in the following original verse which appeared on an early nineteenth century portrait:

Sweet babe she glanced into this world to see  
A sample of its misery.  
Then turned away her languid eye  
To drop a tear or two and die.

We have considerable evidence that death served as a major stimulus in early American art, in painting as well as in sculpture. The superb tombstones certainly attest to this premise, and incidentally double as a monument to the creative instinct among the first settlers. Moreover, both the epitaphs still legible on the funeral carvings



Memorial to Richard King  
Needlework and watercolor on silk  
1775. Connecticut





**SAMUEL JORDAN:**  
**Eaton Family Memorial**  
 Oil. 1831  
 New Hampshire



**S. PETIBONE:** Memorial to Giles Petibone  
 Watercolor. 1811. Maine



**Memorial to Nathaniel Kimball  
 and Lieut. Daniel Kimball**  
 Watercolor. 1800. Connecticut



SALOME HENSEL: Memorial to Benevolent Howard. Oil on velvet. 1823. Pennsylvania

Mourning Picture: Watercolor on satin. c. 1820. Connecticut





Memorial for George H. Hills. Watercolor. 1833. Massachusetts



SUSANE WALTERS: Memorial for Nicholas Cattin  
Oil. 1852. New York

and the inscriptions commonly found on the mourning pictures clearly suggest the Calvinistic belief dominant during the formative periods of this country.

Folk art was a community experience. It was a mass expression removed from the co-existent "fine arts" of the high-priced professionals employed by the few wealthy patrons. Folk art was created to fill a specific need.

Comparable to the Pennsylvania German certificates of birth, baptism and confirmation, mourning pictures were a necessary by-product. According to a reply received by the writer some years ago from Dr. Charles F. Bolduan, director of Health Education, there was no official bureau of vital statistics — even in New York — until 1866. Whatever the era, there is no question that birth, marriage and death are momentous events for the immediate family. Such records were essential in one form or another. In lieu of public facilities, the family Bible seemed the most likely instrument for documenting "vital statistics," and such entries are found [continued on page 158]



# Illuminated Manuscripts

BY DONALD A. SHELLEY

Another facet of American primitive painting, sometimes referred to as "pen paintings," is the group of bold and colorful Pennsylvania German frakturs of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the decorative professional pen drawings of the mid-nineteenth century. The author nine years ago called attention to these "regional examples of an early American folk art" in the *Quarterly Bulletin of The New-York Historical Society* (April 1945), but the contents of the Garbisch collection much more amply demonstrate the variety of types, forms, and regions to be studied.

The Pennsylvania Germans contributed far more than their proportionate share of excellent early American calligraphy in their hand-illuminated *vorschriften* (or writing copies), their *taufscheins* (or birth and baptismal certificates), house blessings, spiritual labyrinths, and decorative drawings — all referred to as "fraktur" work because of the frequent appearance of early sixteenth century fraktur-form letters in them. Although these forms and ideas spilled over into adjoining areas such as New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia, the Yankee penman drew upon other themes and upon other media. Empire and Victorian notes are struck in the representation of Biblical themes as taking place in New England surroundings, and in the elaborate quill and steel pen drawings which so carefully refer to the name of the artist and the location of his studio. This latter fact is in marked contrast to the anonymity surrounding the local Pennsylvania German scribe who rarely reveals his identity.

On the basis of the few illuminators who did identify themselves, however, it is possible to state that the fraktur drawings of the second half of the eighteenth century were more apt to be the work of ministers and school teachers, whereas in the nineteenth century the itinerant professional penman takes over. In the earlier Pennsylvania fraktur paintings, large Gothic initials and conventionalized bird and flower motifs prevail, whereas in the later ones more realistic representations of the human figure fill the margins and



HENRICH OTTO: Parrot and Bird  
Pen and watercolor. c. 1780. Pennsylvania

less text appears. The frakturs of the earlier period are characterized by a distinctly Medieval flavor as opposed to the nineteenth century pictorial nature of the later.

The Garbisch collection is quite rich in these fraktur illuminations of the second half of the eighteenth century which depend heavily upon late Gothic calligraphy, although only a few are illustrated here. A small-size drawing by Henrich Otto and a *vorschrift* by Christian Strengé well illustrate the two components of early fraktur work: design and calligraphy. The third component, color, unfortunately cannot be demonstrated here, but we must remember that after the illuminator had carefully sketched in his text and border designs, he dramatized his vigorous penmanship by the addition of rich and vibrant colors. Naturally, the strength of his homemade pigments frequently varied, but as a rule those in the earlier specimens are soft and mellow in comparison with the brilliance of the later ones.



CHRISTIAN STRENGE: Writing Copy for Daniel Bart. Pen and watercolor. 1797. Pennsylvania



Birth and Baptismal Certificate of Johannes Bixler. Pen and watercolor. 1805. Pennsylvania

The fraktur work done at the Ephrata Cloister in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which is the earliest dated illumination in this country, appears in these warm yellows, greens and blues. Both the large decorative religious texts which still hang upon the walls of the Saal (or chapel of the Cloister) and the rare musical manuscripts, which date from about 1745 to 1755, embody this same color scheme. It is only in a few of their later productions that the Ephrata illuminators began to employ brighter colors, including the intense reds and yellows which became so characteristic of Pennsylvania German fraktur work as a whole. The illuminated manuscripts of the self-sufficient Ephrata Cloister, however, seem to have had very little influence upon the design or colors of the *vorschriften*, *taufscheins*, and other fraktur forms that were executed in such large quantities from about 1765 onwards not only in the neighboring areas of Lancaster and Berks counties, but also throughout the other counties of eastern Pennsylvania: Northampton, Lehigh, Bucks, Montgomery, Lebanon, Dauphin, and York.

Henrich Otto, who lived near the Ephrata Cloister in Cocalico Township, Lancaster County, heralds the rise of a completely new school of illuminators in fraktur drawings such as the one illustrated. This new generation did not limit itself to one form alone, but could turn out a fine *taufschein* or birth certificate as easily as a decorative drawing, and a *vorschrift* or writing specimen as easily as a book-plate. These illuminators were content either to produce a hand-drawn *taufschein* composition, or to fill in the borders of a printed certificate form with motifs of their own design. In fact, Otto has even been credited with the decoration of a group of Lancaster County dower chests bearing motifs lifted from his fraktur work. The clear, incisive nature of Henrich Otto's designs is apparent, and carries over into his written texts on other frakturs, all of which identify him as a calligrapher of great ability and imagination. Two other fraktur drawings similar to the one illustrated, as well as a number of hand-illuminated and part-printed birth and baptismal certificates by Otto are also in the Garbisch Collection.

Christian Streng, Schoolmaster, who was active



Birth Certificate of Catharine Hartman  
Pen and watercolor. 1825. Pennsylvania

chiefly in Hempfield Township, Bucks County, in the 1790's, concentrated more especially upon religious *vorschriften* or writing copies, like the one reproduced.

By 1800, the *taufschein* (both hand-written and printed) was challenging the popularity of the religious *vorschrift*, and the text of the birth and baptismal certificate had completely crystallized. The influence of some of the eighteenth century illuminators, and especially Henrich Otto, had a far-reaching effect upon the designs of countless unknown birth and baptismal certificate illuminators of the early nineteenth century.

The Johannes Bixler birth and baptismal certificate of 1805 which we illustrate demonstrates the manner in which Otto's bird and flower motifs were constantly being reintroduced by early nineteenth century fraktur illuminators. Here, his Carolina Parrot motif is repeated four-fold, with checkerboard body and stylized tail substituted for Otto's fairly realistic representation. The panel containing the text of the certificate, however, harks back to the eighteenth century shape seen so often on date-stones of early Pennsylvania houses. While the written text still makes an effort at decorative calligraphy in the capital let-





Birth Certificate of William Kulb  
Pen and watercolor. 1832  
Pennsylvania



Catharine and Charles  
Pen and watercolor  
c. 1830. Pennsylvania



Birth and Baptismal Certificate of Christina Becker  
Pen and watercolor. c. 1804. Virginia

ters and interlaced motifs at the head of the text, a single letter style is already well advanced. From now on the use of everyday script in English, rather than in German, such as is seen in the Catharine Hartman birth certificate, is the rule rather than the exception.

By 1825, the dramatic fraktur vorschritt with its Biblical text had been entirely superseded by the taufschein, both hand-written and printed. Even in the taufscheins, the earlier uniform text with its purely religious content is now replaced by a Victorian pictorial composition in which the text plays an unimportant role and the baptismal information is reduced to its merest essentials.

Somehow or other, even the bird and floral motifs undergo this same change. The penwork either becomes quite loose and sketchy or, as in the Catharine Hartman birth certificate, dated 1825, occasionally is omitted altogether. The birds have become entirely stylized, with penwork reinforcing the brushed-in areas only at the essential points, and likewise the tulips on which they stand; whereas the star-shaped "barn signs" above them are executed entirely by brush without any penwork whatsoever. A thinning out of both text

and calligraphy have taken place, and we now get more the feeling of a painting and less of a pen drawing. Four similar certificates from Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, all dating in the 1820's, are also in the Garbisch Collection.

The same change applies in some measure to the 1832 birth and baptismal certificate of William Kulb, although the Pennsylvania German love of ornamental text and detailed designs has survived to a somewhat greater extent. Whereas certain areas such as the man's trousers and the woman's dress are not clearly outlined with the pen, considerable care has been taken with the six floral and bird designs which are placed across the top and bottom of the taufschein. These are so carefully delineated that one feels that a printed certificate must have been the source for them.

The last step in the Victorianization of Pennsylvania German fraktur appears in such wholly pictorial subjects as *Catherine and Charles* by Daniel Peterman, the York County illuminator who was active mainly in Shrewsbury and Mannheim Townships from about 1835 to 1860. Decorative and colorful though it be, Peterman's nervous penmanship leaves much to be desired, and its appeal to our senses is based entirely on the effect of the composition as a whole. A far cry it is, indeed, from the simple and dynamic quality of fraktur illumination of the late eighteenth century such as we have already noted.

The Pennsylvania forms were certain to have their effect upon the styles of neighboring states, especially those such as Virginia and Maryland into which so many Germans migrated; New Jersey, to the East, felt only slightly the impact of the fraktur style. It is an interesting fact that while many Pennsylvania German certificates were carried Westward into Ohio and Indiana, quite a few taufscheins with Pennsylvania motifs and designs were actually written in Virginia and Maryland — according to the texts of the certificates themselves.

If we turn back the clock, for a moment, the birth and baptismal certificate of Christina Becker born in 1804 in Shenandoah County, Virginia, could easily pass for a Pennsylvania fraktur. Here are the angels, birds and flowers, as well as the ornamental text in several letter-sizes, which are so characteristic of the Pennsylvania German pen-

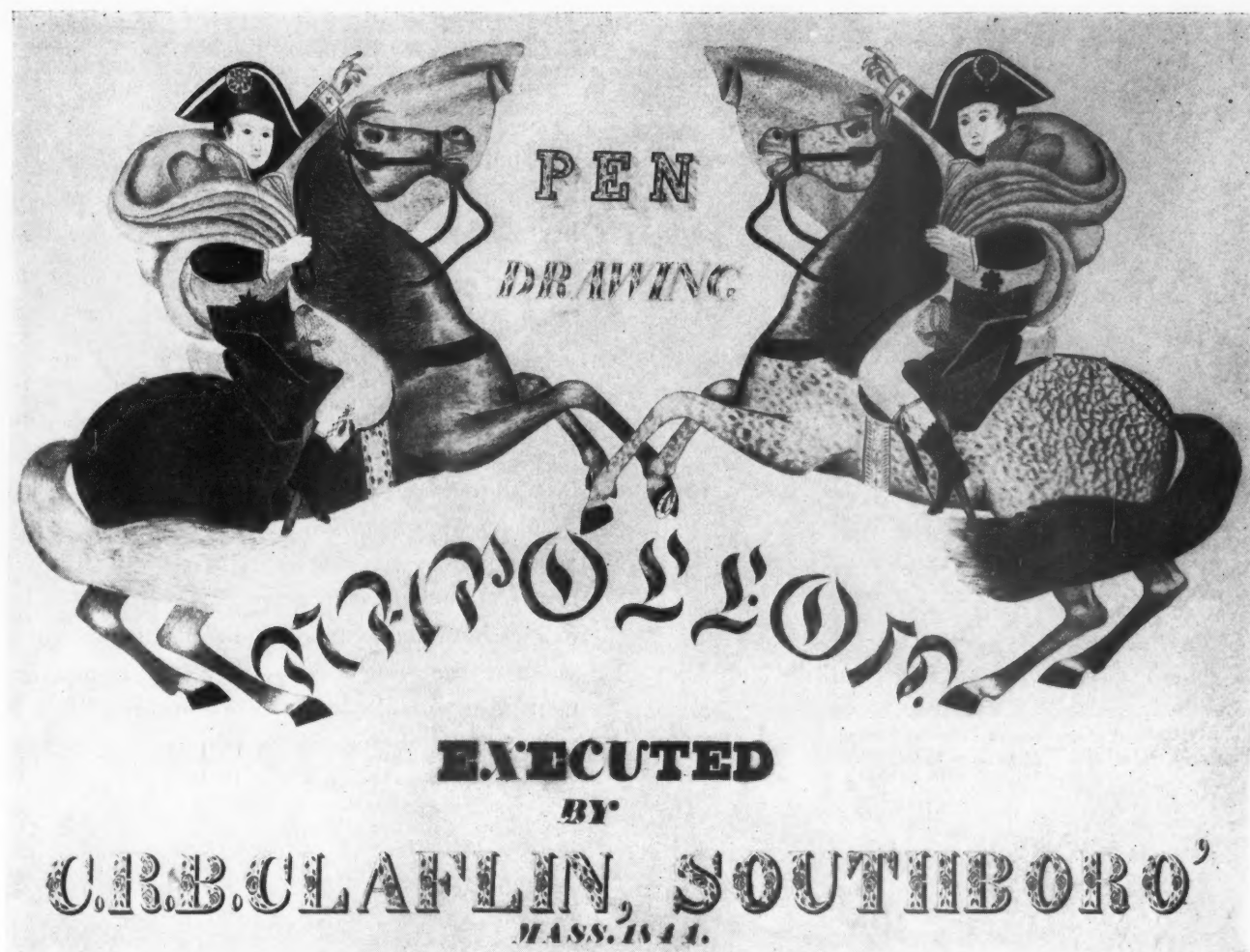


Birth and Baptismal Certificate of  
Susannah Guysinger  
Pen and watercolor. 1825  
Maryland



Birth Certificate of Susanna Moffett  
Pen and watercolor. c. 1805. New Jersey





C. R. B. CLAFLIN: Napoleon. Pen and colored inks. 1844. Massachusetts

man. Especially notable is the presentation of the text in the form of a heart, surrounded by a border of interlocked tulips. And the final clinching fact is the wording of the text which begins: "Diesen beyden Ehegatten, Als. . . ." The derivation of this taufschein could not be more clear.

The same text, in English, appears in the birth and baptismal certificate of Susannah Guysinger, born in 1825 in Baltimore County, Maryland. Carried over again from the Pennsylvania taufscheins are the American eagle from the Seal of the United States, the four profiles of women, and the layout of the page itself which appears earlier in many nearby Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, certificates. Other Maryland taufscheins that have appeared show this same combination of Pennsylvania forms with English, rather than German, text.

Birth records from New Jersey, however, follow a totally different pattern. While superficially

they look like the Pennsylvania ones, an analysis of their composition betrays an English, rather than a German, background. One senses that the prototype of these compositions must have been very early samplers, so different are they in their whole concept.

Susanna Moffett's birth record of 1805, which is a typical New Jersey example, contains a simple rectangular text panel around which various floral motifs are arranged, with the focal center of the design placed at the bottom of the page. In some examples, entire scenes are presented employing human figures, animals, and occasionally furniture. The inscription at the top usually contains the name of the child in ornamental capitals, followed by hand-written text that is much simpler in form than the Pennsylvania examples. Although no religious denomination, county or township, or sign of the zodiac is mentioned, it does specify that Susanna "was born February 3d. on the 6th.



Family Record of Joshua and Laura Foster  
Pen and watercolor. c. 1847. New York

day of the week, at 7 o'clock in the morning, Anno Domini 1805."

In contrast to these fraktur drawings of the Central Atlantic states, the New York and New England penman's chief product was the "Family Record" which listed in four columns beneath four arches the names, births, marriages, and deaths of a particular family. At the head of the page, beneath a large central arch but above the four columns, we find listed the names of the parents, the places and dates of their birth, and frequently a simple landscape or rural scene. The family record of Joshua C. Foster and Laura Roberts Foster, executed in Putnam County, New York, about 1847, amply illustrates this New York and New England prototype, even to the pair of hearts at the top of the marriage column, and a pair of hour-glasses to symbolize death. Executed much in the same way as the Pennsylvania German pieces, employing penwork outlines filled in with color by means of a [continued on page 165]



JAMES M. GIBBS: The Indian Hunter. Pen drawing. c. 1850. Rhode Island



Overmantel with Homestead. Oil on wood. c. 1795. New Hampshire

## Coach, Sign and Fancy Painting

BY NINA FLETCHER LITTLE

Since the seventeenth century the ornamental painter has held an important place in American decorative arts. Often apprentice-trained in England or Scotland, he was a master of his craft, but he frequently plied his trade in the new world in company with importations with which he was constantly in competition. Thomas Child, for instance, who arrived in Boston before 1688 had been a member of the Honourable Company of Painter-Stainers of London and displayed the Company arms on his signboard which is still preserved in the Old State House. The various types of work which he, and similar artisans, executed may be gleaned from contemporary records. Between 1689 and 1706 he painted window frames and shutters for the original building of King's Chapel, the fence and outside work of "the Latten Schoolmasters House," primed and painted twenty gun carriages for use at Castle William, and rendered a bill to the estate of Samuel Shrimpton of Boston for a hatchment painted to be displayed at the time of the funeral.

As the eighteenth century progressed all types

of heraldry, coach, sign and ship painting were widely practised, also much "fancy" painting. This included graining, marbleizing, landscape painting, gilding, japanning, varnishing and lettering. Few of these artisans could resist taking likenesses when opportunity offered and advertisements announcing "portrait painting in oil of all sizes from busts to full figures [also] miniature painting" appear in early newspapers. Sometimes the results unfortunately resembled the signboards which adorned the local taverns!

A great many of these men were itinerants who had homes and families in small towns from where they went out on seasonal trips by foot, on horseback or with conveyance. During these peregrinations they planned to stay with the families where they found employment, or at the local inn some rooms of which they were prepared to decorate in return for board and lodging. Their cash intake was not large. In the eighteenth century remuneration for house painting was computed by the area covered rather than by the time expended, 10 pence per square yard being charged





**The Park.** Oil on wood. c. 1795  
From the Makepiece-Ray house, Franklin, Massachusetts

**Plaster overmantel**  
Oil on plaster. c. 1800. Vermont



by the Boston firm of Rea and Johnston before the Revolution. In the early nineteenth century 33¢ per hour was paid for house painting in Ipswich, Massachusetts, and \$1.50 per day in Otsego County, New York.

Many men who became well known for their accomplished portraits and landscapes began their careers as ornamental painters. Christian Gallagher, who in 1789 was accorded the honor of a sitting by President Washington, advertised in Philadelphia, "Ornamental Painting, Signs, Buckets and Cornices executed in stile. . . ." Alvan Fisher, successful landscape artist of the Hudson River School, began by painting fire screens under John Ritto Penniman who was a versatile Boston decorator. Although in later years Fisher felt that this ornamental training had hampered his style and "required years to shake off," nevertheless it undoubtedly provided a sound basis for his later studies in England and France.

Following the English tradition landscapes painted on woodwork began to make their appearance in America before the middle of the eighteenth century. Some entirely paneled interiors, such as the handsome room from Marmion, Virginia, in the Metropolitan Museum, had views



Attributed to FRANCIS GUY: Mount Vernon Fireboard. Oil. c. 1790. Maryland

Greek Revival Fireboard. Oil on wood. c. 1825. From the Hibbard house, Ithaca, New York





Fireboard. Oil on wood. c. 1830. Pennsylvania

painted on each panel. One room from Morattico, Richmond County, Virginia (now in the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum), has pictorial panels surrounded by marbleized bolection moldings on the chimneybreast only, the other walls being covered with flock paper to give the effect of tapestry hangings. In the average home, however, only a single panel over the fireplace displayed a landscape as in the overmantel with the white homestead here reproduced, which was removed from the Captain Robert Parker house in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, when it was demolished a few years ago.

These landscapes varied greatly according to the ability of the decorator who was called upon to do the work. Although members of the Lon-

don Company of Painter-Stainers were trained in all branches of their art, including the drawing of figures and landscapes, it is to be doubted whether their American cousins received such thorough instruction in the more specialized aspects of their trade. While some of the landscapes are competent, and all exhibit a real feeling for color and composition, many are appealing for their subject matter rather than for their artistic merit. Most of the views are not of actual places, although the artists used the elements with which they were familiar in portraying the contemporary scene.

To close the fireplaces during the warm months of the year chimneyboards were constructed of wood or canvas, and were either painted or cov-



ered with wall paper. These were used widely during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and one of the earliest references to them is contained in the letter book of John Custis of Williamsburg, Virginia, who made the following request in 1723: "Get me two pieces of as good painting as you can procure. It is to put in ye summer before my chimneys to hide ye fireplace. Let them bee some good flowers in potts of various kinds and whatever else fancy you think fitt. I send this early that the painter may have time to do them well and the colors time to dry . . . I had much rather have none than have daubing."

Many types of painted decoration were used on these boards including land and seascapes, figures, arrangements of fruit and flowers, and wild animals. The fireboard with Venus, Cupid and Diana formed part of the mural decoration in the Greek Revival Hibbard house in Ithaca, New York, where the walls were frescoed with a combination of scenes depicting Niagara Falls, Mount Vesuvius and the Erie Canal. The representation of Mount Vernon is cleverly painted with a simulated gold frame to suggest an actual picture, the slots at the bottom being cut to allow the andirons to rest forward on the hearth.

While subject and figure pieces were undoubtedly painted on plaster walls during the second half of the eighteenth century, so few examples have survived that one feels the fashion could not have been widespread. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, however, many artists traveled the back country embellishing homes and tavern ballrooms with scenes and repeat-patterns intended to obviate the use of paper hangings, as in the plaster overmantel illustrated. Rufus Porter, who traveled widely in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine during the 1820s and 30s averred that he could "paint the entire walls of a parlor . . . with a variety of fancy scenery and a beautiful set of shade trees, and finish the same complete in less than five hours." Although this may have been a slight exaggeration, the average cost of a room so decorated was only ten dollars.

Sign painting in America was not only a craft inherited from the old world, but was a necessity as well in the days when many of the average citizens were unable to read. A pictorial board



Indian Tobacco Shop Sign  
Oil on wood. c. 1850. New York

denoting a pair of "butes and shous" advertised the cobbler in Providence in 1718, while a large whale floating on the surface of a blue ocean indicated a shop where whale oil for lamps might be purchased in early nineteenth century Philadelphia. Tobacconists were fond of displaying mercantile scenes, or the ubiquitous Indian, either painted or carved in the round. Two of these signs are illustrated. [continued on page 166]



C. C. E. LERMOND: Sleigh Back. Oil on wood. c. 1840. Massachusetts



Tobacco Sign. Oil on wood. c. 1860. Massachusetts



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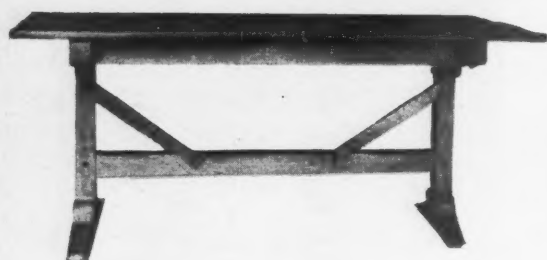
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Pilgrim Communion table, Plymouth, Massachusetts, circa 1650. This table was fashioned of native quartered oak with a maple top. Its construction and original patina prove beyond a reasonable doubt that it is of Pilgrim origin.

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### Portrait Gallery continued from page 98

ful attention countless others have properly gone to the dump.

A second trait common to most portrait painters of the period is their businesslike approach. They went out on the highways drumming up commissions. Newspapers carried their advertisements. Making a likeness was a commercial enterprise to most. Fundamentally it was a craft, frequently self-taught, but still a craft learned in order to make a living, not a luxury or leisure-time occupation. As in any trade, some aspirants succeeded, while others, after a few unsuccessful attempts, shifted to some other line of work. Of those artists who did succeed, many had used sign painting, coach decorating, and other occupations as natural stepping stones to portrait painting.

How many of the anonymous painters whose works are so much admired today graduated from primitive style into a more academic manner will never be known. Just as the farm boy went to the city to make his mark and fortune, responding consciously or unconsciously to the new values determining the spirit of American society in the making, so many painters in the provinces strove to erase by training and study the qualities cherished today by admirers of the American Primitive. James Guild, a peddler from Tunbridge, Vermont, took to making crude portraits of upper New York state villagers. Later he wrote in his diary, "I gave Mr. Inman . . . \$30 to paint my likeness that I might see him. This improved me very much." So much improvement did Guild gain from this and other academic associations that seven months in Charleston netted him \$13,000 and led him to London where soon he was introduced into a club of artists who met once a week in a life class. ". . . the first subject we had was a young lady, stript to the beef . . . and we twenty artists sitting around drawing her beautiful figure, perfectly naked. . . ."

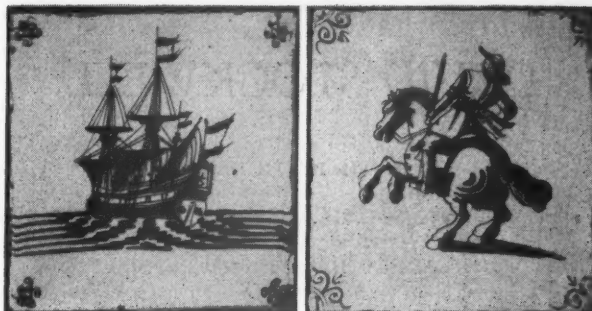
But for every painter who graduated from what today is generally termed the primitive school, countless others were content to keep their style unchanged and continue their trade along country roads or in the villages and towns. The desire to be preserved in oil was insatiable. Hundreds

of painters were needed to meet the demand. Their very existence demonstrates the customers' satisfaction with the abilities of these self-trained artists.

As limitless as the demand for portraiture — the advent of photography far from satisfying seems at first only to have whetted the desire — was the variety available. From the simplest hollow-cut silhouette to full length oil paintings the artist could provide for any taste or purse. Few individual painters could offer the full gamut, but the customer could always find some craftsman to meet his needs. Some painters had an adjustable price schedule. For \$2.92 including frame and glass, a customer could, after an hour's sitting, take home with him a "flat" likeness that satisfied what must have been hundreds of visitors to Prior's "Painting Garret." At the other end of the scale, the same artist was prepared to execute portraits of a more finished nature for fees as high as \$35 or more (see illustration). Others, like Joseph H. Davis, with a rigid work formula, doubtless had a standard rate that reflected their unchanging method.

To list the varieties available would make a Homeric catalog indeed. Silhouettes may not fall entirely within the field of primitive portraiture but the more elaborated types display the same traits that characterize other efforts to capture the American visage with pastels, watercolor, tempera, or oil. Heads, busts, full lengths, from miniatures to more than life size, were available to prospective sitters whether individuals or whole families.

What the sitter received varied immensely in style and character. From "pure" primitive to those artists struggling to lift themselves into fashionable academic circles, the spectrum confronting yesterday's customer and today's collector ranges from ultra-violent to infra-dig. In the visible and more generally accepted bands certain distinctive qualities are recognizable. Modern writers have called attention to the directness of the primitive artist who despite or perhaps because of an obvious inability or unwillingness to cope with problems of perspective, modeling, and light, still managed to convey an intense feeling through an intuitive and frequently success-



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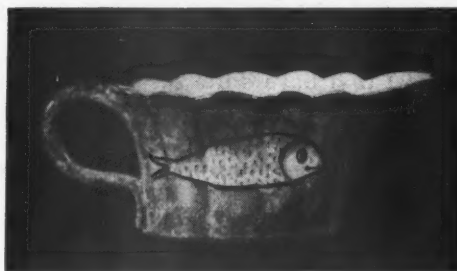
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*Rarities in Americana*

ful use of linear design and color. Having abandoned the attempt to create three-dimensional copies of nature, the artist selected elements important to him and his customers and remade nature in terms of what he saw in his mind's eye, painting what he knew rather more than what he saw. It is this quality of abstract visualization that intrigues artist-collectors in our era. After a century of testing the limits of representational art, the modern artist turned to his own inner world and in so doing understood that the American primitive was something more than a quaint relic of the past.

To assume that in these pictures can be found the beginning expression of a truly native American spirit in art is a speculation fraught with great temptations and great risks. Discoveries of a few similar pictures coming from England and other places have made us realize that much more research is needed both in this country and abroad. Indeed one wonders whether among our cherished American primitives there may not be some at least that have quite recently experienced a sea voyage.

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### *History Painting continued from page 124*

where this person learned the pictorial gains of spotting those bare bushforms across the nearer spit of land, of increasing the inward lean along the row of little figures in the boat. Above all else, what was the source of this jaggedly calligraphic linear rhythm across the base, partly subdued by the two long parallels above it but suddenly escaping at the right and rushing upward into the gesturing climax of the blackly silhouetted tree?

Sophisticated minds can perpetrate technical blunders as obvious as those of any American "primitive," but they cannot save themselves by this Anon.'s easy trust in gesturing with the brush or by Field's slower doggedness but equal courage. It may be natural enough to feel envy for such seemingly undeserved successes, but the envy will have to be spread pretty thin to take in the curiously numerous examples of the same quality spread throughout the nineteenth century. Their makers apparently painted them about as straightforwardly as they went to church and sang hymns, and that is one reason for their present historical and spiritual authenticity.

### *Inhabited Landscapes cont. from page 111*

America as elsewhere, many pure landscapes, entirely devoid of genre elements, were painted at the higher professional levels. However, popular engravers, and their close allies, the artisan and amateur painters, continued to prefer the old mixture of the two modes. This is exemplified, as far as prints are concerned, by the tremendously successful lithographs of Currier and Ives; as far as paintings are concerned, by the pictures from the Garbisch collection which accompany this article. Having won their artistic revolution, the people saw no reason why they should not pile on their plates all the spoils, and even ape the aristocrats they had overthrown by glorying in their own remodelings of nature. Certainly a depiction of an alms house in all its glory such as the one here reproduced was an act of piety to the common man!



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### *Daily Life* continued from page 117

of that roistering, happy day. This is primitive genre at its best. (Now God help me if somebody comes up with a print which Linton Park copied! And it could happen.)

It will be argued and right briskly that our academic genre painters did this same sort of thing and did it better. They did it differently and I take issue with the word "better." In the first place they tended to do it more romantically, they tended to look at a scene like this, as Bingham or Mount so often looked at such scenes, with a gently tolerant sentimentality and, not infrequently, a snobbish eye. One feels about the best of the primitive work that the artist sees his material not as an outsider but as one sharing the mood and values of his subject matter. This is true of *Flax-scutching Bee*, of *The Old Plantation* at Colonial Williamsburg, of *Sea Captains Carousing at Surinam*, at the City Art Museum of St. Louis, and of Fibich's *York Springs Churchyard* at Fenimore House, Cooperstown, which I consider the four best primitive genre paintings in America from both aesthetic and socio-historic viewpoints.

There is the further question of the place of paintings of this sort in the total body of our culture. We are fortunate in having artistic expression over a wide arc. We are lucky in having both the tall tales of Davy Crockett and the work of Mark Twain, a song like "The Pizen Sarpint" and a novel like *Ethan Frome*. The only thing we need to remember is that we require different calipers to evaluate these creative efforts at the various cultural levels.

### *In Memoriam* continued from page 138

on either the fly leaf or the prescribed page commonly printed in the early family Bible.

Generally, the pertinent facts concerning the "voyage from the cradle to the grave" were simply recorded with the names and dates, but, characterizing the desire for embellishment during periods of austerity, the data was often adorned with illuminated letters, with elaborate borders or colorful illustrations. As a progression from these informal deviations, the independent pictorial record evolved. There are many Family Records with inclusive information, but the mourning

pictures are far more extensive in quantity, demonstrating again that death was a major motivation in art.

Mourning pictures achieved a rapid but short-lived popularity, and almost exclusively in the northeastern states. The popularity of the "hand-fashioned" memorials continued for about fifty years in a variety of interpretations until lithographic prints were made available — after 1820 — in a large assortment of designs incorporating the accepted symbols with a blank space provided on the tombstone for affixing the name (or names) of the deceased and the dates.

No doubt, further research will disclose the true ancestry of this fascinating manifestation of American folk art. To date the only clues are rings, lockets and miniatures bearing funereal emblems, some made of hair, some painted, and some combining the two media. These existed in Russia as well as in France — where Marie Antoinette served as inspiration for memorial jewelry. A century earlier in England, Pepys refers to the presentation of rings and other mourning mementoes by close family members to friends of the deceased. In America, the custom was obviously prevalent from 1650 to 1742, when the Massachusetts General Court passed an ordinance forbidding such offerings — probably as a reaction to the ostentatious distribution of two hundred rings at one Boston funeral. However, the ordinance was not entirely effective, for the custom continued long after. The best known example is a miniature containing the hair of George Washington ordered as a gift by Martha for Tobias Lear, the Presidential secretary.

The mourning picture can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century, although it is commonly believed that it did not appear until 1799, along with an avalanche of china, toiles, engravings, and the relatively few original paintings commemorating George Washington's death, such as the one illustrated. Enough ante-dated pictures remain to establish an earlier origin as well as a more intimate family connection. In the Garbisch collection alone, there are two splendid examples "wrought" in embroidery preceding the "national mourning." The one reproduced is dated 1775. The other is inscribed: "Sacred to

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the memory of NATHANIEL KIMBALL. Obt. 22 Oct. 1778, AE 6 yrs." As a strange coincidence, the collection contains another memorial to this same child, here illustrated. His name is included with the identical date in a watercolor painted twenty-two years later on the occasion of the death of Lieut. Daniel, undoubtedly his father, whose dedication appears on the large companion tombstone.

In studying the content, it is interesting to note that despite their connotation the mourning pictures have little semblance of death — unlike the earlier gravestones which abound with incised images portraying death's heads, skeletons, scythes, and similarly morbid symbols. On the contrary, the pictures are imbued with a sense of good cheer, and almost a gay fare-thee-well. How unexpected in mood are the verdant greens of the landscape, the bright hues of tropical blooms, the blue of the skies with their decorative clouds and Chagall-like angels, all merging to establish an idyllic setting for the mourners draped under the inevitable weeping willow. The willow tree, the tomb, urn, and the figures of the bereaved are always present, but the variations on the theme as a whole are as extraordinary as the scope of media employed. The plates on the adjoining pages give some indication of this variety of interpretation and treatment. Combined with the accepted basic symbols are seascapes, vistas of villages, churches, boats, animals, angels, garlands, and doves, and even an occasional portrait of the deceased or of his home. Whether simple in theme or elaborate, whether completely original or based on available patterns, the over-all conception is consistently personal and achieves an integration

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of pictorial design that is remarkable in quality.

In style and technique the range is from childish naiveté to almost classical perfection. Except for a rare painting in oil like the Eaton Family Memorial signed by Samuel Jordan, the mourning pictures, more than any other category of American folk art, were a female specialty, probably so because needlework was the first medium employed in memorials. Social custom demanded that spinning, weaving, sewing, knitting, and cross-stitch be part of each girl's daily chores. Samplers were a common requisite in each home. Not only did cross-stitch develop facility, but combined such virtues as learning the ABC's in the process, and acquaintance with pious maxims. As economic conditions improved and relative leisure was attained, embroidery was the next logical step from the elementary stitching.

Embroidery was taught in all schools for well bred "young ladies" and subsequently became fashionable among the less affluent members of the community. Stencils and other pictorial guides were made available. Nevertheless, even when such patterns were employed, the final results are distinguished by inventiveness of design, fresh color, and personal nuances uninhibited by academic boundaries. Individuality was further accentuated in the course of the transition from needle to brush, from the all-embroidered pictures to ones combined with painted areas. Characteristically, the American penchant for short cuts served in good stead, for by 1810 the majority of the mourning pictures were executed entirely with paint, some remorsefully simulating the effect of embroidery stitches. The media comprised India ink, watercolor, pin-prick, painting on velvet or

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glass, and the infrequent oil on canvas or wood. In every instance a space was left for the "vital statistics" and, if desired, for affectionate comment. The fact that a substantial number of memorials are un-inscribed makes it reasonable to assume that mourning pictures were produced not only in commemoration of those who passed on, but were also prepared for the eventuality. The latter are the minority since most contain the obituary facts with a lugubrious verse extolling the virtues of the deceased or a brief sentimental couplet speeding the soul on to heaven.

A comparison of existing signatures with the names on the tombstones indicates conclusively that a large percentage were the work of close members of the family, although from time to time an unmistakable similarity of subject and style appears on several pictures inscribed with different surnames. While such discrepancies suggest the possibility of pseudo-professionals in the field, it is more likely that a talented girl expressed her devotion for less immediate kin or for a friend. Actually, the proportion of signed examples is small, alternating about equally between inscriptions on the backs of the pictures and those containing the name of the maker in gilt paint on the black glass mat (see the Memorial to Giles Petibone). Now and then the name of the instructress or school was included.

Inevitably, as lithographic prints were introduced commercially, the art of painting memorials declined and was practically abandoned. Again, as in other types of folk art, a provocative chapter was closed.

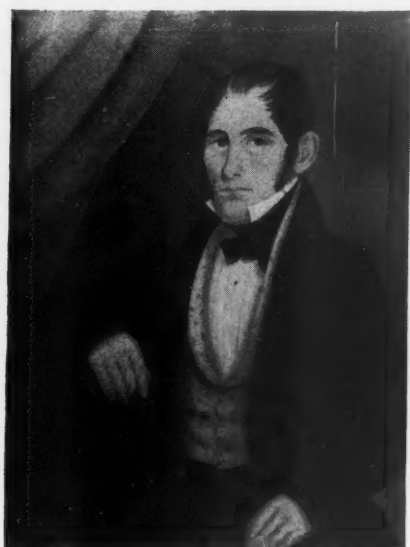
It is our good fortune, indeed, that so many original mourning pictures survive and that such outstanding examples found a home in the Garbisch collection, providing accessible material for study. Factually, these pictures supply unique data for ascertaining the life span of our ancestors, as compared with ours. Esthetically, they provide a rich record of ingenuity and inventiveness, of artistic trends and directions which are part of the national ancestry of our art of today. The group of mourning pictures remains as a lasting memorial to the people who died generations ago, and as a permanent testimonial to the esthetic life of early America.

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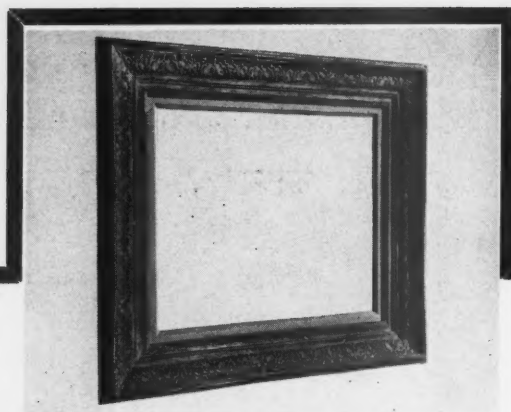
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## ***Illuminated Manuscripts*** *cont. from pg. 146*

brush, they nevertheless represent an art form that is distinct and apart from the Pennsylvania ones.

No collection of early American fraktur and penwork would be complete without a few examples of the quill pen drawing produced during the mid- and late nineteenth century. In the Garbisch Collection are numerous examples that surpass in size and beauty of execution those seen elsewhere. Some of these are reenforced with color, while others appear in black and white only. Most collectors would be thrilled to own even a single horseman in this medium, but the "Pen Drawing [of] Napoleon executed by C. R. B. Claffin, Southboro', Mass., 1844.," with its elaborately drawn double-representation of the general and handsomely executed calligraphy directly beneath, should warm any collector's heart. Mr. Claffin's penwork and use of colored inks are combined to make an eminently satisfactory pictorial composition. Add to all this the identification and location of the scribe, as well as the date of execution, and the story is complete.

Typical of the second half of the nineteenth century is the pen drawing of "The Indian Hunter, Designed and Executed by James M. Gibbs," which turned up in Rhode Island. Its large size, 23 x 30 inches, is reminiscent of the large panoramic landscapes in oil of the same period by F. E. Church or Albert Bierstadt. Consistent in execution and scale throughout, yet with considerable variety of form and texture, it is a masterpiece of Victorian penmanship.

*The Indian Hunter*, though far removed in time from Henrich Otto's Carolina Parrot fraktur drawing as well as different in background, nevertheless fully expresses the spirit of the period and region of its origin. It is just as Victorian in concept as Otto's fraktur design is Medieval in flavor. Likewise, the New England family records contrast strongly with the Pennsylvania German birth and baptismal certificates, although each is the product of its own environment. Thus, while all of these American primitive "pen paintings" have certain superficial similarities, each bears the unmistakable stamp of the region and period which produced it.



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*Coach Painting continued from page 151*

It is the tavern signs, however, with their picturesque scenes and figures which especially catch the imagination. They bring to mind the country town of a bygone day with its public houses marked by poles or brackets supporting swinging signboards. These were hung high at right angles to the street, at second or even third floor level, so that those arriving by coach, as well as on foot, could discern at a distance a place of rest and entertainment.

The decorating of all types of vehicles also formed a large part of the decorator's daily task. Striping or "hair work" was used on almost every type of wheeled conveyance, and "cyphers, arms and ornaments" were emblazoned on the doors of coaches. American makers had to compete with vehicles imported from abroad, and Elkanah Deane from Dublin who opened a shop on Broad St., New York, advertised in 1764 that he "proposes to make, trim, paint, gild and finish in the most genteel and elegant taste all kinds of coaches, chariots, landaus, phaetons . . . and sleighs." All the finishing was done in his own shop, he promised to make his work "equal to any imported from England," and a coach and harness for two horses "with livery lace, fringed seat cloth, and richly painted and finished" cost the purchaser two hundred pounds, which work he guaranteed for a year.

During the nineteenth century carriages and sleighs were stenciled in the manner of contemporary chairs and settees, their seat backs being handsomely painted with landscapes embellished with ornamental striping and corner pieces, such as the one here reproduced.



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## Future Issues

*October Issue . . .*

### CHARLES SHEELER

#### *Early American Painters — New Art Books*

The leading article on Sheeler by Frederick S. Wight has been scheduled in collaboration with the University of California, Los Angeles, on the occasion of the retrospective Sheeler exhibition to be held at the Art Galleries in October. The article will correspond in size and scope with the *Art in America* monographs published over a period of years on early American artists. It will be the first of a series of feature articles on contemporary Americans.

*December Issue . . .*

### TRENDS

This special issue, guest-edited by S. Lane Faison, Jr., will publish an interesting assortment of opinion about very recent developments in American art and architecture.

Among the contributors are Gordon Washburn, who will comment on the Pittsburgh International and its influence; Herbert Ferber, who will survey the scene from the point of view of a creative sculptor; William Liberman, who will discuss recent graphic work by American artists; and such critics as James Fitzsimmons, recipient of one of the Mather Citations in Art Criticism, and Sam Hunter, an editor of *Art Digest*. Several European critics will also contribute to this issue.

• • •

Subscribers please note that the quarterly issues are scheduled for *February, May, October, and December*. Contents will be devoted to all aspects of American art.

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## Contributors

**Virgil Barker**, Professor of Art History at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, was formerly Curator of Paintings at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh and Director of the Kansas City Art Institute. His writing on American primitives goes back to an article in *The Arts* for March 1924. His *Critical Introduction to American Painting* (1931) includes a list of 21 folk painters, and his *American Painting: History and Interpretation* (1950) includes several chapters on artisans and amateurs.

**Carl W. Drepperd** is a popular writer on American art and antiques, and a collector of their documentary sources. Especially noteworthy is his collection of almost all the known drawing and painting instruction books published in America from 1792 to 1876 recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum. His bibliography of these instruction books, published by the New York Public Library, is the standard reference work on the subject. His *American Pioneer Arts and Artists* was one of the first major publications on our early native arts.

**Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch** have not only been collectors of art for a long time, but have also taken an active part in historic preservation in this country. Colonel Garbisch is a trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and of the Maryland Historical Society. Mrs. Garbisch is now restoring Old Trinity Episcopal Church, built before 1692 near Church Creek, Maryland, as a memorial to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Walter P. Chrysler. The Garbisch collection of American primitive paintings, recently presented to the National Gallery of Art, was started in 1944. At the present time their unique collection numbers over 1500 paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — and Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch state that they will continue indefinitely to add to it.

**James Thomas Flexner** is a well known author in the field of early American art. In his multi-volume history of American painting Mr. Flexner discusses primitives as an integral part of the general traditions of their times. The initial volume, *American Painting: First Flowers of Our*

*Wilderness* was published in 1947. The second volume will be published this fall by Harcourt, Brace & Co. His other publications in the field of American painting include *America's Old Masters*, *John Singleton Copley*, *A Short History of American Painting*, and many magazine articles.

**Edith Gregor Halpert**, Director of the Downtown Gallery in New York, pioneered in establishing folk art as an important aspect of our cultural past and a significant ancestor for modern American art. She started the American Folk Art Gallery in 1929 as the first sales and exhibition gallery to specialize in this native art. She has written numerous articles and catalogues in the folk art field, and lectures frequently at museums and forums. Starting in 1929, she assembled the collection of American folk art for Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who divided the paintings and sculpture between Colonial Williamsburg and the Museum of Modern Art. The Downtown Gallery has also contributed to the folk art collections of many individuals, and thirty-eight museums.

**Louis C. Jones**, Director of the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown, says that his interest in folk art stems from twenty years as a student of American folk culture. Most of his writing on folk art has been in relation to the Cooperstown collection at Fenimore House, with articles in *Art in America*, *American Heritage*, *House and Garden*, and the Metropolitan Miniature Album Series on *American Folk Art* with Marshall Davidson. He has furthered the understanding of folk art by the emphasis which has been placed on it in the Seminars on American Culture held at Cooperstown each July.

**Nina Fletcher Little** has been increasingly interested, as collector and art historian, in all types of non-academic painting. Her collecting began in the late 1920's. Her writings on early American painting include articles and monographs in *Antiques*, *Art in America* and *New York History*; a chapter in *Primitive Painters in America* edited by Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester; and *American Decorative Wall Painting* published by Old Sturbridge Village in 1952. Mrs. Little is serving as Consultant to the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Museum now being built at Williamsburg to ex-



Homestead of Cornelius Van Brunt, 8 St. and 3rd Ave., 1848, signed R. VB. Watercolor 17 x 13½.

One of a group of New York views by R. Van Brunt.

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*Donald A. Shelley* is Curator of Fine Arts at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan. Following history of art training at universities in America, London and Paris, he was appointed a Rockefeller Foundation Intern at the Brooklyn Museum and then became the first Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the New-York Historical Society (1938-48). During this time he compiled the *Catalogue of American Portraits*, published a small book titled *Audubon Birds*, and authored numerous articles on American art in the Society's *Bulletin* as well as in *Art in America*, *Magazine of Art*, *American Collector*, and *Antiques*. He later served both as Assistant Professor of American Art at Hunter College and as Curator of the Garbisch Collection.

*Frank O. Spinney*, formerly Curator and now Director of Old Sturbridge Village, has long been interested in what he prefers to call the non-academic artists of the early nineteenth century. As a summer resident of New Hampshire, and later as Director of the Manchester Historic Association, he has focused his research and writing upon that state's artists and craftsmen. He has reconstructed the lives and work of Joseph H. Davis, William Gookin, Edward Merrill, J. Bailey Moore, and other heretofore unpublished artists.

*Alice Winchester*, Editor of *Antiques*, and author of many books and articles on this subject, has long argued the case of heirlooms as cultural history. She has been especially concerned with American folk art and can point proudly to over fifty articles on the subject published in the magazine under her editorship. In the May 1950 issue of the magazine Miss Winchester invited thirteen authorities to formulate an answer to the question "What Is American Folk Art?" and the result was a stimulating symposium. She has participated herself in the Cooperstown Seminars on American Culture and has brought authorities on primitive painting before the audiences of the Antiques Forums held each year at Williamsburg. In addition to her writings on folk art in *Antiques*, she collaborated with Jean Lipman in editing *Primitive Painters in America*.